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MY JOURNAL IN MALAYAN WATERS.

MY JOURNAL IN MALAYAN WATERS;

OR, THE

BLOCKADE OF QUEDAH.

BY

CAPTAIN SHERARD OSBORN, R.N., C.B.,

AUTHOR OF "A CRUISE IN JAPANESE WATERS," ETC.

"Sweet Memory! wafted by thy gentle gale,
Oft up the stream of Time I turn my sail,
To view the fairy-haunts of long-lost hours,
Blest with far greener shades, far fresher flowers."

ROGERS

Second Edition.

LONDON:
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1860.

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Dedicated

TO

CAPTAIN WILLIAM WARREN,

ROYAL NAVY,

COMPANION OF THE MOST HONORABLE ORDER OF THE BATH, ETC. ETC.

AND FORMERLY COMMANDER OF H.M.S. "HYACINTH,"

WITH

THE WARMEST FEELINGS OF LOVE AND RESPECT,

BY

HIS NAVAL NOMINEE AND MIDSHIPMAN,

SHERARD OSBORN.

PREFACE.

THE majority of naval officers are self-taught men: the world their book—the midshipman's dingy berth their "Alma Mater." The author is no exception to the rule; and as his confession may be profitable to others, he makes the public sufficiently a confidant, to say, that to a steady habit of journalising, noting down all he saw, read, or felt, and, in spite of defective spelling and worse grammar, still educating himself with his journal, he is mainly indebted for being able to fight his way up an arduous and emulative profession.

This fact he would fain impress upon the younger branches of the Royal Navy: it will cheer and encourage the humble youth who dons the blue jacket, relying on his head and hand to win those

honours and advancement which, in the natural course of things, appear only to have been created for the influential; and should the author have thrown some bright lights on the character of the much-maligned and misunderstood Malay, the naval officer will see that, in practising habits of observation, not only does the officer discover a source of amusement and instruction for himself, but that, at some time or other, he may be able to serve his fellow-man, or add, at any rate, in a humble way, to the fund of human knowledge.

The general reader will be best able to judge whether the author was justified in troubling them with this second series of "Stray Leaves" from his journals. In transcribing them, the original character of the MS. has been adhered to as much as possible; and, as far as lay in his power, the author has identified himself with that sunny period of life in which the tale of the Blockade of Quedah was originally written.

Some apology is perhaps due to those persons whose names are introduced in the narrative; but

forgiveness may be expected where no harm is said of them.

And it is not less the author's grateful duty to express his warm acknowledgments to the unknown body of critics and reviewers who have so kindly encouraged him by liberal praise in his past efforts. Aspiring, however, to no lofty niche in the temple of literary fame, the author launches his journal, confident that, while telling his sailor's yarn in a sailor's way, he will be sure of sympathy and kindly criticism from his countrymen and countrywomen.

LONDON :
January, 1857.

PREFACE TO SECOND EDITION.

THE slight alteration of the title, which I have taken the liberty to make in this new edition of my Malayan journal, was necessary both in justice to the reading public, as well as myself.

Inexperienced as an author, I published in 1857 the first edition, under the strange name of the Eastern State, off which I had so pleasantly cruised in the Hyacinth, and her boats. I forgot that although Quedah was well known to me and my shipmates, that it was a terra incognita to the majority of men. Readers therefore in search of a book, were perfectly puzzled by the mere term, Quedah. It might be a work on seamanship, under a Hebrew title, a geographical disquisition, or an Eastern vocabulary, and many, who, unscared by the title read the journal, have subsequently written, advising me to do what I have now done—let the title explain the contents of the book.

SHERARD OSBORN, CAPT.

JUNIOR UNITED SERVICE CLUB,
London, Sept. 10th, 1860.

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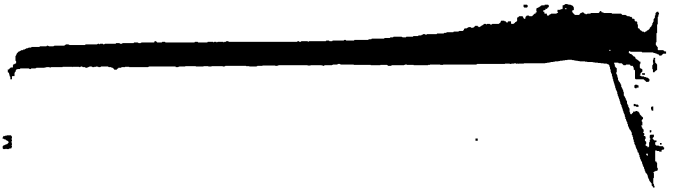

MY JOURNAL IN MALAYAN WATERS.

CHAPTER I.

India Twenty Years ago.—Singapore in the Month of May. —Chinese Junks ready for Sea.—Prahus.—Singapore Boats.—Miniature Junks.—Origin of the form of Junks. —Sound Reason for Junks having one Eye on each Side. —Arab Boats.—Sampan-puchats.—Singapore of old.— Commercial Singapore.—A Sepoy Martyr.—Court House. —Churches with Steeples.—The "Hyacinth" in Port.

On the 29th of May, 1838, the "Hyacinth," one of Her Majesty's 18-gun ship-rigged corvettes, made her number to the signal-staff over the Governor's residence at Singapore, and, aided by the light airs peculiar to that latitude, flapped, rather than sailed, into the anchorage.

Twenty years have made vast improvements in that great emporium of the Eastern Archipelago;

but even that most thoughtless of all human beings, a British midshipman—for such I then was—could not but remark the signs of vitality and active commercial enterprise which have since borne such good fruits. Perhaps this struck one all the more when coming from Ceylon and Hindostan, as we had done. There, it was true, the stranger from Europe could not but observe the air of English comfort and well-to-do which pervaded everything; but, somehow or other, it struck one as being wonderfully stagnated: the feeling that India was highly respectable, highly conservative, but very much mildewed and very much astern of the world, forced itself equally on the mind. Steam was still an agent which Indian quid-nuncs questioned the success of in India, whatever it might do elsewhere. A solitary steamer, the "Diana," was almost as much a curiosity to the European residents of the Straits of Malacca as she was to the Malays or Chinese; and poor Lieut. Waghorn, of our navy, had not yet enlightened Leadenhall by showing them the advantages of the Overland Route; indeed, it was nothing unusual, even at that time, to receive letters five months old, and to consider oneself remarkably lucky in getting such late intelligence. Now, if a letter was as many weeks old, the merchant of Sin-

gapore would complain of the irregularities of the mail boats.

However, it is with Singapore of the past I have to deal. Before the town, and at the distance of a mile from it, lay numerous huge junks, all glittering with white and red and green and black; their strange eyes staring with all the vacuity of a Chinaman, and apparently wondering how they would ever find their way to China. Thither they were now bound, with the strength of the south-west monsoon to blow them, "viénto a pópa," into the ports of the provinces of Quantung and Fokien, whence they had come with clandestine emigrants, teas, and silks, and sugars, aided by the north-east monsoon of the previous winter. Many a goodly yard of Manchester cottons, and manufactures by the ton of English handicraft, now filled their capacious holds. On their main-mast heads, which mast was, as usual, one long spar of stupendous girth, a most original arrangement in the shape of a dog-vane had been fixed, and from it long heavy, silken streamers waved in the hot sky. Around these vessels floated "full many a rood" their long rattan cables, and I began almost to believe in the sailor's story of a Chinaman's anchor floating, when I saw their cables do so, and that the anchors of their

largest vessels were constructed of wood. Unearthly cries, resembling swine in distress, issued from these ponderous arks, and evidently meant for songs by their sailors, as they hoisted in the long-boats preparatory to going to sea.

Within these junks, in comparison with which we looked uncommonly small, were thousands of prahus of every size and form, stretching away into a narrow and shoal harbour which lies to the right of the town. They were traders from every port of the Archipelago; they had held a constant floating fair until very lately, and had disposed of their wares, completed return cargoes, and would likewise shortly depart for their different destinations. A merchant assured us, that as many as 4000 of these vessels had arrived during the past monsoon; and, but for the Dutch interference and jealousy, many more would visit Singapore yearly. Skimming about amongst these vessels of curious forms and still more curious rigs, there were hundreds of boats in whose shape the ingenuity of man seemed to be exhausted in inventing bodies, intended for propulsion through the water, which should differ as much as possible from each other. The Singapore sampan decidedly carried off the palm for beauty and fleetness, approaching, in sharpness of outline and the chances of drowning

the sitters, to one of our above-bridge racing wherries on the Thames: two Malay rowers, each pulling a single broad-bladed oar, could in these sampans beat our fleetest gig. Then, in contradistinction to these, came the Chinese boat — from which the name "sampan" had, I believe, been derived — a perfect miniature junk, except that she had no deck; painted with ports along the side, and green, white, red, and black eyes in the bow. In the large ones of this description, which evidently belonged to the junks in the offing, the crews sometimes amounted to twelve or sixteen persons; but in those which belonged to Singapore, and merely served as a means of communication between the vessels and the shore — or in some cases were owned by fishermen of the place — the pigmy junk was invariably rowed by one man. In all, however, whether big Chinese sampans or small ones, the mode of rowing was alike. The descendants of Confucius, differing from the Europeans in that as in every other respect, instead of sitting down to their oars, when rowing they always stand up; instead of being before their oars, they are always abaft them; and instead of the rowers facing aft, they always face forward. The form of the sampan and junk is, of course, that of the model, a slipper;

and that not a lady's one either, but a good broad-toed, broad-heeled, broad-soled one,—a good old-fashioned list slipper, in short. In case the reader should not have heard the legend upon the authority of which rests the fact that the slipper became the model for the Chinese ship-builders and waterman's companies, I may as well tell him that, in the time of that wise monarch who walled off China from the rest of the world by land,—between two and three hundred years before the birth of Christ, and about the time Alexander the Great invaded Persia—I like to be particular about dates!—the Chinese ship-builders gave a great deal of anxiety to the heaven-descended monarch by introducing clippers, copper bottomed ships, and other abominable innovations—which quite threatened to subvert his wise intentions of keeping the Flowery Land free from the contamination of strangers. One day the monarch, pressed down with anxiety as to how his plans for the suppression of navigation in general were to be carried out, sat in public divan at Pekin to hear, as was the wont in those days, the petitions of his people. There was a rush through the crowd, and a subject with a wooden model under his arm threw himself at the monarch's feet, rapping his head most devotedly upon the steps of the imperial throne; he

was told to rise, and present his claim to heaven-born consideration.

The wretch was a ship-builder of Southern China. He held a perfect model of a sharp-keeled vessel in his hands, such as barbarians two thousand years afterwards are seen to sail in, and implored his Majesty to patronise his improvement in the construction of imperial ships! Sacrilege of the deepest dye! Here, on the one hand, sat Inexpressible Wisdom, who desired to make the earth stand still; on the other, Science, who wished to carry the people of the Flowery Land—their arts and peaceful discoveries, the printing-press, the magnet, the manufacture of silks and paper—to nations who employed their leisure hours in butchering one another; and maybe bring back their bloodthirstiness as return cargoes. It was horrible—most horrible!—but the monarch, though he sat cross-legged, was a merciful monarch: he grasped his slipper—for it was ready to his hand. "Avaunt, monster!" he shouted; and, with unerring aim, he hove his sacred slipper at the miscreant's head. "Avaunt!—from henceforth build all thy vessels on the model of that old shoe; and, ministers," said he, addressing the Court, "let an edict go forth that my slipper alone shall be the type of every floating thing in the Flowery Land;

and"—lowering his voice to his prime minister and favourite, the heaven-born deigned to close one eye and leave the other open as he muttered—"and it's devilish funny cruising at sea they will have, if they adhere to that model, oh! Fan-tse!" Since that day China has adhered steadily to the imperial fancy; and the royal act of winking is immortalised by the solitary eye which stares from the bow of their vessels; the other one is supposed to be shut; and that solitary eye says, as audibly as a wooden eye can say it,—

"It's devilish funny cruising we have at sea, oh! Fan-tse!"

Whilst cogitating profoundly, as jolly-boat midshipmen invariably do, on the profound wisdom of Chinese legislators, and wondering whether there are any more like them in the world at present, two other queer craft appear on the scene.

The one is a boat built on English lines, though rather round and full in form; she is painted with alternate streaks of every colour upon this earth, and resembles, as they are reflected on the polished surface of the calm sea and again re-reflected upon her sides, a dying dolphin, though a very ugly one. In her the crew—dressed in frocks of divers gay colours—are rowing in a peculiar manner, by

rising off their seats as they dip their oars in the water, and then, when they throw their weight on the oars, coming down upon their seats with a "sough!" which must have loosened the teeth in their heads. Yet they sang a wild and plaintive air, splashing the water about with their oars, and rapping down with an energy upon the thwarts which was charmingly original, and excited all my mirth — a mirth which the sitters — very obese-looking Parsees from Bombay — looked very indignant at; at least, as much so as a ton of flesh can ever look. These boats came from some Arab vessels which adorned the anchorage, vessels called grabs, rigged somewhat like brigs, but having a length of bow which was perfectly astounding; indeed, in some of them, the long taper of the bow was one-third the length of the whole vessel, and the bowsprit was entirely inboard.

The other strange boat which attracted my attention was a craft, perhaps 120 feet long, with 20 feet beam, looking like an overgrown Malay sampan, and pulling 50 or 80 oars: she resembled nothing so much in colour and appearance as some huge centipede scrambling over the sea; these were the sampan-puchats — fast vessels, owned by the merchants of Singapore and manned by stalwart Chinese crews; they can outstrip the fleetest

prahus, and are able to sail or pull with equal facility. By them, an immense smuggling trade is done with the Dutch monopolists, and many a rich cargo of spices and gold-dust, antimony and pepper, repays the merchant of Singapore for his speculation in Sheffield and Birmingham goods.

We pull into the little creek or river of Singapore, which splits the good town in two, and here the same Babel-like character is equally thrust upon the observation.

I am, however, to tell of the sea, and shall leave to others the details of Singapore on shore—premising that a good description has yet to be written of that Queen of the Malayan Archipelago. It will suffice for a sailor's narrative to say, that the whole town stands upon a level of no very great extent, which stretches along the base of gently swelling hills, on the top of the highest of which stands Government House, tenanted by the present Sir Samuel Bonham —then governor of the Straits of Malacca—a most able civil servant of the Hon. East India Company, beloved by all classes, and always spoken of by the Malays with a mixed feeling of awe and affection, in consequence of the active part he took as a commissioner in the suppression of piracy in the Straits.

The creek separated Singapore into two distinct parts. The one was purely commercial, with its bazaar and market-places, its native town, and overflowing stores, a perfect commercial Babel, where, if a confusion of tongues would induce men to cease building temples to the goddess of wealth, they would have taken ship and fled the spot. There was an energy, a life, a go-aheadism about everything, that struck me much; everybody was in a hurry, everybody pushing with a will. The boatmen condescended to tout for passengers, and were blackguards enough, we heard, to occasionally rap the passengers over the head if they objected to pay them the fare—a proceeding the passengers in other parts of India often reverse by ill-treating the cowardly boatmen; then came along a crowd of half-naked Chinese, staggering under some huge bale of goods, and working with a will which would put London porters or Turkish hammels to the blush; a crowd of black and oily Hindostanees, screeching like jackdaws over a stack of bags of sugar, and Arabs, Englishmen, Jews, Parsees, Armenians, Cochin-Chinese, Siamese, half-castes, and Dutchmen, each struggling who should coin dollars fastest; and as my coxswain, a Gosport boy, expressed himself, on his return from making some humble purchases—"Well, I thought they were a smart set on Common

Hard, sir, but blest if they don't draw one's eye-teeth in Sincumpo!"

It was pleasing to turn, from all these loud noises and strong smells of the commercial part of Singapore, to the opposite side of the river, where, nestling amongst green trees, lay the residences of the wealthy European merchants: all was as dreamy, sleepy, quiet, and picturesque as anyone could desire, and, I am bound to add, as hot; for there the bright equatorial sun was pouring down without shadow or breeze to take off its effects. The Sepoy sentry seemed to be frizzling in his leathern shako and hideous regimentals, and the sensation I felt on regarding his scarlet coat was that he might at any moment burst into flames. He was a military martyr lashed to a British musket instead of a stake. From that painful sight the eye instinctively sought repose upon a mass of cold dark-green foliage, against which the Court-House rose,—a long building, possibly commodious, but decidedly of the Composite order of architecture. Within it, at stated periods, the British embodiment of the Goddess of Justice occasionally sat; whether in the classic pepper-and salt coloured wig and black gown which that deity disguises herself in on our own dear island, I know not; but as Mars adheres in the East to leather

stocks, pipeclay, and black-ball, it is quite possible that Astræa does not abandon horsehair and black silk.

A pretty esplanade, and bungalows standing in pleasant detached patches of ground, stretched away until lost in the jungle and half-cleared country beyond; these, with a very commodious church, constituted the west-end of Singapore: those who built the church, built it to give sitting-room to those who attended; heathens that they were, they forgot the steeple! The good bishop of Calcutta could not—like the Chinese emperor with his old shoe—throw a steeple at their heads; but he did more: he preached a crusade against churches without steeples, and laboured, preached, and subscribed to have steeples put to all Protestant churches so successfully, that steeples went up in the air wherever he had trodden; and I dare say by this time people in Singapore when they build churches build steeples, as they do in modern England, for birds to build in, instead of aisles in which Christians may pray.

But what have I to do with the shore?—Let us return to the "Hyacinth," and busy ourselves, painting and polishing, until every one belonging to her begins to believe she is the most beautiful thing that ever floated. The first lieutenant has holy-

stoned the decks and scraped the masts, until both are as bright as a hound's tooth; the boatswain has been driven distracted by having to square and re-square the yards, in consequence of some slight flaw being detected in their parallelism, and confides to me, as I steer him on board for the sixth time, that "He'll be d—d if he doesn't think them yards are enchanted, for, somehow, he used to square the 'Wapse's' yards in five minutes;" and the carpenter has been "cutting out" the white streak here, and "cutting in" the black paint of the hull there, until he fancies he has brought the appearance of the old sloop to as near perfection as it is possible for mortal man to do.

CHAP. II.

Internal Economy. — Fishing-Parties. — Rumours of Pirates. — News of an Illanoon Squadron. — A floating Menagerie. — An Encounter with Pirates. — The "Hyacinth" searches for Pirates. — A War-fleet heard of. — Quedah Politics. — We are required to aid the Siamese. — Rapid Equipment of Pirate Fleet. — The Malays are warned of the coming Retribution. — Captain Warren visits the Pirate Fleet. — Arrangements are made to equip a Flotilla. — The "Hyacinth" and Gun-boats off Quedah. — My Gun-boat and Crew. — The Coxswain's Excitability. — The Interpreter's Appearance.

THE Captain has gone ashore to take up his quarters with the Governor; the second lieutenant says it is his duty to be out of the ship as much as possible in harbour, and has gone to carry his theory into practice. Those of the subordinate officers who are blest with funds, go on shore to hire horses, and try and ride their tails off; those that have not, calculate the number of days that must intervene before they have a right to inform their affectionate relatives, through the Navy Agents, that they are alive, and of course doing well, and are heard to assert that they will commemorate the cashing of that prospective

bill by feats in horsemanship and gastronomy which would make both steeds and poultry tremble could they only hear them. Being of those whose happiness was involved in a cheque not yet arrived at maturity, I stayed on board; and, by way of amusement, cricket and fishing parties were made up. Of the former, I shall not speak: for any one can form an idea of what cricketing must be at a distance of sixty miles from the equator, the temperature at the time we played, 3 P.M., being about 84° in the shadiest part of Singapore. The seining-parties were decidedly the most pleasant and healthy. The plan of proceedings usually consisted in either of the two seniors of the midshipman's berth obtaining permission from the first lieutenant to make up a fishing party; that done, there was a selection of volunteers from the seamen, marines, and boys, sufficient to man the cutter and jolly-boat. Into the latter boat, the seine-poles and lines were carefully placed, and in the cutter a goodly store of biscuit and pork, tea, coffee, and a little private stock of spirits. A couple of good frying-pans and some lard were of course a necessary addition, in order that we might enjoy a supper upon fish fresh from the water—a gastronomic treat in all climates, but doubly so in the East Indies. After evening quarters, the fishermen repaired to

their boats, clad in any old clothes they chose to put on; and just as evening closed in we would leave the ship, repair to some beautiful sandy beaches among the neighbouring islands, and there, through the early part of the night, fish away to our hearts' content, then muster round a roaring fire, enjoy a merry supper of fried fish, rashers of pork, and biscuit, washed down with tea or coffee made in a tea-kettle in gipsy fashion. The supper over, a glass of grog per man would be produced from the officers' private store, pipes would be lit, songs would be sung, and yarns told, until the small hours warned us to return to our floating home, and the next day's routine. These night parties, in after days, led us into strange adventures and funny scenes; but I will not forestall my narrative: suffice it that at that time we were novices in the East, and all was charming, strange, and exciting.

Eagerly believing, eagerly listening to all that transpired around us,—it may be supposed that nothing was more keenly sought for, by all on board the "Hyacinth," than news about Malay pirates, those ogres, those bogies of the Archipelago; and just then two events happened, sufficient to satiate the appetite for the piratical for some time to come. The one was of the past, but still not long since. The

"Wolf," a sister-sloop that we had come out to relieve and send home, had twice fallen in with piratical squadrons.

On the first occasion, her boats, consisting of a pinnace and cutter, fell in with the pirates in a fine bay near Cape Romania, the extreme southern point of the Malayan peninsula. The prahus, some twelve or thirteen in number, fought the boats and escaped, the forces being very disproportionate. This fact sharpened our eagerness, and we naturally longed for an equally good opportunity, an anxiety which was soon likely to be gratified, as the traders from Cochin-China and Siam had reported that an Illanoon squadron was cruising amongst the islands which lie on the eastern side of the peninsula, and intercepting prahus and junks bound to Singapore. The "Wolf" had been despatched after these gentry, and the "Diana" steamer likewise, with a gun-boat in tow, when the fact became undoubted of the existence of Illanoons. We awaited intelligence of their movements, and shortly afterwards the "Diana" arrived from a place called Tringanau, about sixty miles to the northward, and reported that an action had taken place, and the pirates, after fighting like heroes, had, it was supposed, retreated to their own country across the China Sea.

One fine morning our gallant captain sent off to express his astonishment that the arrival of H. M. S. "Wolf" had not been reported to him. I hardly fancy his astonishment was greater than our own, on the fact being ascertained to be true; for, although a vessel had been seen to come in, no one supposed she was a man-of-war. I fancy that it was the skill displayed in disguising the "Wolf" that had made her so successful in falling in with Malay pirates; and I must say the effort made to give her the appearance of a merchantman was carried to a wonderful extent; for even when on board of her it was difficult to realise the fact that a pennant flew overhead. She was a perfect floating menagerie. Baboons flew playfully at your legs; a loathsome orang-outang, or "man of the woods," crawled up to shake hands, and made you thank Providence that man, in the progressive theory, had at any rate advanced a stride or two above the creature before you; pigs and peccaries, sheep, fowls, a honey bear, and a black panther, formed a scene Wombwell would have gloated over, whilst Mr. Gould, or any other ornithologist, might have found a week's work in classifying all the parrots, louries, and screeching and whistling pets which added to the riot below.

However, we went on board the "Wolf" to hear about the pirates, and not to look at wild birds and beasts.

They told us that, one day whilst cruising off Tringanau, reports arrived of pirates being among the neighbouring islands. Two Company's gun-boats with the pinnace and cutter were detached to seek them. The morning after the boats left, at daylight, six large prahus were seen attacking a junk about five miles to seaward of the ship. It was then a stark calm, and the "Wolf" was perfectly powerless to help the unfortunate junk; the gun-boats and large boats being nowhere in sight. While in the greatest state of suspense, the steamer "Diana" was seen approaching from the south with a gun-boat in tow. The "Wolf" immediately sent every available man and officer into the "Diana" to fight her guns, and she then steered for the junk, which was still making a manful resistance.

Seeing her approach, the prahus formed in line abreast, with their bows pointed towards her, their guns, be it remembered, being always mounted forward and directed ahead. The prahus, six in number, were large-sized Illanoons, pulling two tiers of oars, and full of slaves and fighting men. The action was a severe one, but the "Diana" could not

run the risk of attempting to board them, and had to take care that they did not succeed in executing that manœuvre upon her, which they repeatedly attempted to effect. Many of their fighting men, creese in hand, were seen to leap into the water in the hope of boarding the steamer; one or two were cut down as they actually had hold of the boats towing astern of her; and, in short, though they suffered tremendously, none of the prahus surrendered, though one sunk, and from her some twenty wretches were taken: the other five prahus escaped, and had eluded all further search by the "Wolf" or her boats.

Shortly after this event we sailed in the "Hyacinth" to seek the remnant of this piratical squadron. Our cruise was a delightfully interesting one in every respect, and, although we picked up the trail of the pirates in the islands they had retreated to after the fight, we soon learnt from different sources that they had there destroyed three more of their prahus as being unfit for the voyage across the China or Sooloo Sea, in consequence of injuries received from the "Diana's" grape and canister, and then embarking all their crews in the two sound vessels, they had borne up to return to their own homes — a sea voyage of about twelve hundred miles.

Returning empty handed and somewhat disappointed to Singapore, about the end of July, we were still further disgusted to learn that Malay war-prahus, to the number of forty, had made their appearance at the opposite and western end of the Straits.

They had, we learnt, fitted out on the Sumatran coast, at a place called Battu-putih, or "White Rocks," and carrying two thousand fighting men: the pirates had taken advantage of our absence from the Penang station to capture from the Siamese Government the important province of Quedah.

This fleet of prahus, styled by us a piratical one, sailed under the colours of the ex-rajah of Quedah; and although many of the leaders were known and avowed pirates, still the strong European party at Penang maintained that they were lawful belligerents battling to regain their own.

The East India Company and Lord Auckland, then Governor-General of India, took however an adverse view of the Malay claim to Quedah, and declared them pirates, though upon what grounds no one seemed very well able to show.

Quedah had always, in olden time, been a Malay state, though possibly tributary alternately to either the Emperor of Siam or the Emperor of Malacca, as

the power of either happened to be in the ascendant. After the Portuguese crushed the Malay Empire by the capture of Malacca in 1511, it is possible the Rajah of Quedah presented his "golden flower" to the Emperor of Siam, and in a way swore fealty to that monarch. We, however, seem to have heeded the suzerainty of the Siamese very little, when it served the Honourable Company's interest; for in 1786 we find them inducing the Rajah of Quedah, on his own sole right and responsibility, to sell us the island of Penang for the yearly sum of ten thousand dollars, an annuity upon which the descendants of the rulers of Quedah now exist in Malacca.

However, about the time we were engaged in the first Burmese war, and when it became highly desirable to keep the Siamese neutral in the fray, the Emperor of Siam chose to invade Quedah, and after committing unheard-of atrocities upon the Malay inhabitants, he established his rule, and was confirmed in it by a treaty with us; with, I believe, an offensive and defensive alliance clause, so far as the respective boundaries of British and Siamese rule were concerned. The Malay chieftains considered themselves aggrieved, and lost no opportunity of harassing the Siamese, and the present attack had been patiently conspired and prearranged at Malacca.

Money, arms, and prahus, had been secretly collected at Battu-putih; and then the chiefs raised the old red flag of Quedah, and there was no lack of enterprising and disaffected spirits to join them.

A Prince Abdullah, a descendant of the ex-rajah, was the nominal head of the insurrection; he was a wild, dissipated young man, but had around him a very able body of chiefs or ministers, called "Tonkoos," men of undoubted courage, and sons of that race which had so manfully struggled against Alphonso Albuquerque and his powerful fleets in the heyday of Portugal's glory. Their plan of operations was ably laid down by a Tonkoo Mahomet Said; and owing to the absence of ourselves—the "Diana," "Wolf," and gun-boats—there was no one to interfere with its successful execution.

The Siamese, however, knew perfectly well how to appeal to a treaty when it involved their own interests, and a deputation from Bankok soon waited upon the Governor of the Straits of Malacca, calling upon the British to aid them in asserting their legal yet unjust rights. British good faith to one party had to be supported at the sacrifice of British justice towards the other; and, as usual, the unfortunate Malays were thrown overboard; their rights ignored,

themselves declared pirates, and their leader, a rebel escaped from British surveillance.

The Malays had, I have before said, calculated their operations admirably. Their fleet was fitted out on the Sumatran shore, near the province of Acheen; arms, powder, and other stores were liberally, but covertly, supplied from European as well as native traders at Penang; the payment to be hereafter made in rice and other products of the rich lands of Quedah. In the height of the south-west monsoon, when the bad weather season prevails along the western seaboard of the Malayan peninsula, and the inhabitants naturally fancied themselves secure from such a visit, the Malay Tonkoos, or chiefs, watched for a good opportunity, crossed the Straits to a secure place, not many miles from Pulo Penang, there concentrated their forces, and then like hawks pounced upon their prey. Dashing at once into the rivers with their light vessels, they stockaded the mouths; and knowing that at that season our men-of-war could not approach close enough to injure them, and that open ships' boats could not live off the coast, the Malays felt that they had six months before them to establish and fortify their positions before the "white men" could commence operations, or the Siamese troops advance from Bankok.

Knowing this, and feeling we had been perfectly checkmated, the "Hyacinth" was sent to warn the Malays of the coming retribution, and to make such observations as might serve for the forthcoming season of operations.

Leaving Penang in September, we first proceeded to the town of Quedah, lying at the mouth of a river of the same name. On an old Portuguese fort which commands the town and entrance to the river, the Malayan colours were flying, and Tonkoo Mahomet Said was found to be in command. Captain Warren had a conference with that chief and Prince Abdullah, in which they were duly warned to abstain from a course which must bring down upon them the wrath of the all-potent Company, and pardon was promised in the event of their doing so immediately. The chief made out a very good case, as seen from a Malay point of view, and nothing but a sense of duty could prevent one sympathising in the efforts made by these gallant sea-rovers to regain their own. "Tell the Company," said Prince Abdullah, with that theatrical air and gesture so natural to the well-born Asiatic, "that we shall brave all consequences: we have reconquered Quedah, which was, and is, ours by a right which no law can abrogate; and, so long as we can wield a sword or hold a spear, we

will maintain the heritage descended from our forefathers!" No prahus were in sight at this place; and it was not until after a long and arduous search amongst dangerous and intricate channels, at a tempestuous season of the year, that we discovered the Malay fleet, they being then at a place called Trang, on the northern boundary of the province of Quedah. Here, as at the capital, the ship could not approach the coast, and Captain Warren had to throw himself amongst the Malays, in an open boat, with some eight or ten English seamen. Passing a shallow entrance to a river, which was carefully stockaded and flanked with gingal * batteries, Captain Warren, after a short pull, found himself amongst a formidable fleet of fifty prahus, carrying guns and swivels, or culverins, and with crews varying from twenty to fifty men.

A guard of 100 armed men marched down to receive the Rajah Lant, or sea-king, of the British Queen; and, with great ceremony and state, conducted him to their admiral or leader, a noted old pirate named Datoo Mahomet Alee, Datoo being his title as chieftain or lord.

* A gingal is a long and heavy wall-piece, much used by Asiatics, and very formidable in their hands.

Had treachery been so common as it is generally supposed to be amongst the much vilified Malays, assuredly it would have been an easy task to put to death the British captain and his boat's crew, for they were fairly in the lion's den, and the bearers ot a hostile message, apart from Mahomet Alee knowing full well that a price had been fixed, for his capture as a felon, by the Company. Yet, on the contrary, they behaved with the utmost generosity and civility, listened respectfully to the warning given of future punishment, and, even here, as at Quedah, allowed a proclamation to be posted up, calling on all these pirates to disperse.

The conference over, Captain Warren learnt that the Malay attack had been successful on every point, and, apart from organising the means of preserving their hold of the province, they intended in the coming monsoon to assail the Siamese in such strength as to prevent their detaching a force to reconquer Quedah. To a wish expressed by Captain Warren, that they would come out and have a fair fight in open water, Mahomet Alee replied, that although he had never fought a British man-of-war, he was one who could boast of having beaten off a man-of-war's boats; and nothing would give him greater pleasure than trying to do so again, if Captain

Warren would come to fight him in the spot he then was. With such mutual expressions of chivalrous desire to meet again, the "Hyacinth" returned to report proceedings to the Governor of the Straits of Malacca.

During the month of November we went to Singapore to arrange a plan of operations, in conjunction with the Siamese, emissaries from his golden-tufted Majesty having been sent there for that purpose. Singapore was chosen as the place of outfit for the flotilla, because the Malays were less likely to glean information of our plans there than they would undoubtedly have been from their agents and sympathisers at Penang.

It was arranged that directly the north-east monsoon, or fine weather season, commenced, the British Government were to closely blockade the coast of Quedah, whilst a Siamese army of 30,000 men marched down to reconquer the province; and we were to treat as pirates all armed prahus fallen in with.

The "Hyacinth," besides her own boats, had lent to her for this service three lugger-rigged and decked gun-boats, named, respectively, the "Diamond," "Pearl," and "Emerald," or Nos. 1, 2, and 3. They were all manned by Malays, and the "Diamond"

was commanded by a half-caste native gentleman in the Company's service. A small steamer, the only one that at that time had been seen in those waters, was available in case of necessity; and the very terror inspired by the "Diana,"— or "fire-ship," as the Malays called her — was a host in itself. When all was ready, we suddenly left Singapore; and giving Penang as a rendezvous, the corvette and gun-boats made the best of their way there, completed water and provisions, and gleaned all necessary information, prior to starting for Quedah; off which place the "Hyacinth" anchored on December 7th, with the gun-boats around her.

Great was the delight and excitement through the ship when the fact of the boats being about to leave for months, manned and armed, came to our knowledge. The pinnace and cutter were got out, and provisioned. All our lieutenants having either gone home on promotion, or died, the command of the boats generally fell to a mate, Mr. George Drake, in the pinnace; the senior midshipman, Mr. Barclay, had the cutter; whilst the two gun-boats fell respectively to Mr. Peter Halkett and myself.

Not a little proud of my command, at an early hour on the 8th I found myself on board the Hon. Company's gun-boat "Emerald." She was a fine

wholesome boat, about forty-eight feet long, carrying two large lugger sails, and with a crew of twenty-five stout Malays, besides a serang*, or boatswain. Completely decked over, she carried in her bow an 18-pounder carronade, on a traversing carriage, and a brass 6-pounder gun on a pivot upon the quarter-deck; and had, moreover, an ample store of all arms on board.

My swarthy crew received their new commander in the height of Malay *tenue*. The gayest pocket-handkerchiefs tied round their heads, and their bodies wrapped in the tasteful cotton plaid of the country, called a sarong, and their bare legs and sinewy arms, with the warlike creese, gave them the air of as many game-cocks. Not a soul of them could speak a word of English; and until I could master enough Malay to be understood, my sole means of communication lay through an individual who introduced himself to me as "Jamboo, sir! — Interpreter, sir!" "And a very dirty one too," I mentally added.

The pantomime over, of passing a small valise, containing my kit, into a little cabin, which I saw abaft the mainmast, I desired Jamboo to direct the serang

* Serang is a native term for boatswain.

to get under weigh and follow the pinnace, for she was already pulling in for Quedah fort, whilst the "Hyacinth," spreading her wings, was running northward for another river called the Parlis. The crew in a trice ran the anchor to the bows, and got out the sweeps*, as there was no wind, and pulled so heartily as to show me that we had, at any rate, the legs of all our consorts. Checking the zeal of my serang, who, standing amongst the rowers, was exciting them by word and gesture to outstrip the senior officer, I dropped astern into my place, and proceeded to make myself acquainted with my strange shipmates and vessel.

The interpreter Jamboo's history was a short one. He was one of that numerous class who do not know their own fathers. His mother, who was a Burmese woman of Moulmein, averred that a British officer was entitled to the honour of the parentage, though Jamboo, with a smile, said, 'I don't know sar, she say so!" an assertion I was quite ready to believe. A half-caste he undoubtedly was, and, as such, passed for a Portuguese! although his only reason for so saying was, that the people of that country were about as

* Sweep is a nautical term applied to large oars used in heavy vessels; for instance, those used in barges are "sweeps," properly speaking.

dark as himself, and that Jamboo, finding himself without a religion as well as a father, had, *faute de mieux*, become a Roman Catholic, his faith being strongly mixed up with his poor mother's Buddhism and the wild superstitions of his Malayan companions. His face, of a dark olive colour, was perfectly beautiful; his figure, although effeminate, was graceful and lithe to a degree; his hands and feet might have served Phidias as a model; and he was not wanting in intelligence. Weak and nervous in temperament, he was as obedient as a child, and it was painful to witness his cringing, fawning manner.

Jamboo's account of my worthy crew was somewhat startling: the majority of them had, I learnt, at various times been imprisoned in Singapore jail as pirates, the most notorious scamp being my serang, Jadee. "Pleasant company!" I ejaculated, as I scanned the rogues who, seated along the deck on either side, were throwing themselves back with a shout at every stroke of their "sweeps," and displaying twenty-five as reckless, devil-may-care countenances as any equal number of seamen ever exhibited. The serang, Jadee, was, to my astonishment, standing on the main-hatch, with a long Illanoon creese in his hand, which he waved as he gave utterance to a series of expressions, uttered with frantic energy and rapid pantomime,

stopping every now and then to allow his crew to express their approval of what he said, by a general chorus of Ugh! which sounded like a groan, or an exulting shout of Ya! ya! ya! which was far more musical. "He is only telling them what fighting and plunder is in store for them," said Jadee, "and pointing out the certainty of victory while fighting with white men on their side, mixing it up with descriptions of revellings they will have when this war is over."

CHAP. III.

Commence to blockade Quedah Fort. — Jadee's imaginary Fight with a Tonkoo. — My Malay Coxswain's Appearance. — His Attire and Character. — Jadee's piratical Propensities. — Escapes Imprisonment by hanging a Man. — Quedah Fort and Town. — The Appearance of the adjacent Country. — A wet Night. — My Crew. — Jadee's Want of Bigotry. — Primitive Mode of eating.

THE pinnace, with the "Pearl" and "Emerald," soon reached the shallow bar which lies across the Quedah river, a feature common to every river on this side of the Malayan peninsula, and doubtless occasioned by the action of the south-west monsoon against the natural course of the rivers, causing the sediment to be deposited at their entrances instead of being carried out into the deeper parts of the sea. The fort of Quedah hoisted its colours, and armed men showed themselves along the battlements; but we merely placed ourselves in line across the entrance of the river, out of gunshot, and anchored to commence the blockade. The north-east monsoon, which is the fine weather season of this coast, had scarcely set in

yet, and flying showers, with occasional squalls, promised a wet and cheerless night. Rain-awnings were spread at once, and after every preparation had been made for a sudden action with war-prahus, I sat down with Jamboo, and my serang, Jadee, to glean information and pick up Malay. To my inquiry, through the interpreter, as to the opinion Jadee held of the line of conduct likely to be pursued by the occupants of Quedah, he assured me that the Malays would never voluntarily fight the "white men, *Orang-putihs*," as we, of all Europeans, are styled *par excellence*. It was quite possible, if we were very careless, that they would try and capture Englishmen as hostages for their own safety; and that, by way of inspiriting his men, a Malay chief might, if he found one of the gun-boats alone, which was manned by Malays, fight her in the hopes of an easier capture than they would find in the pinnace. The very prospect of such a piece of good fortune seemed to arouse all Jadee's recollections of by-gone forays and skirmishes; for no sooner had Jamboo told him that I only hoped Tonkoo Mahomet Said might take it into his head to try the experiment upon the "Emerald," or "Numero Tega,"* as she was called

* "Tega" is Malay for "Three;" the Malays preferred calling the vessel by her number, instead of by her name of "Emerald."

by Jadee, than my serang sprang to his legs, and shouted, quivering with passion, for Campar! Campar soon came: Campar being a swarthy giant, who did the double duty of armourer and carpenter.

In reply to some order, he dived below, and brought up a thick quilted red vest, without arms, which the excited Jadee donned at once, girded up his loins, gave his head-dress a still more ferocious cock, and then baring his arms, with a long Illanoon creese in one hand and a short "badi," or stabbing knife, in the other, he enacted a savage pantomime of a supposed mortal fight between himself and Mahomet Said, in which he evidently conquered the Tonkoo; and finished off, after calling him, his mother, sisters, and female relations, all sorts of unseemly names, by launching at him, in a voice of thunder, his whole stock of English: "Ah! you d—d poul! come alongside!" Poul, or fool, being supposed to be something with which the white men emphatically cursed their enemies.

Amused beyond measure, though somewhat differently to my crew, who, holding Jadee in the greatest awe, crowded aft and looked on, firmly believing that Tonkoo Mahomet Said would be so treated, should his enterprise lead him to combat the noted Jadee, I quietly told him that I only trusted

he would do as well if the real fight ever came off, and meantime would dispense with such a performance, especially as the row he made had caused "Numero Tega" to be hailed from the pinnace to know if anything was amiss. This piece of advice Jadee took in such good part, that he constantly rehearsed the pantomime for my amusement whenever he saw me low-spirited, or in want of occupation.

Jadee informed us that his cognomen amongst the people of Singapore, and white men generally, was Jack Ketch; a nickname he pronounced so clippingly that it sounded not unlike his real one: and from Jambo I heard the following history of my redoubted serang; but, previous to repeating it, let me introduce the hero.

Jadee stood about five feet seven inches in height; his colour was of a light brown. His broad shoulders, small waist, and fine hips, with well-formed arms and legs covered with muscles in strong relief, denoted great strength and activity. His delicate yet far from effeminate hands and feet were but little reconcilable to an Englishman's ideas with a man who had lived from the cradle by the sweat of his brow. A square well-formed head, well placed on a strong nervous neck, completed the man. The countenance, although that of a pure Malay, had nothing so re-

pulsive about it as people generally suppose; the cheek-bones were high, and the face somewhat square, but his eyes were good and expressive, without being either deep set or with bloodshot eyeballs, as the regular "property Malays" of novel-writers usually are represented: a good nose and forehead, with a massive but beardless chin, gave much character to the face of Jadee, and his short black hair, brushed up on end, with a sort of rollicking laughing air about the man, required nothing to fill up the picture of a Malayan buccaneer. Jadee was a beau withal. Round his waist, and falling to the knees like a Highland kilt, he wore a circular piece of cotton plaid, of a small blue and white pattern; stiff with starch, it stuck out, and half hid in its folds his handsome creese, a weapon never from a Malay's side. Over one shoulder and across to the opposite hip, hung in an easy jaunty manner another sarong of brighter hues, generally red and yellow tartan; it served as a covering to the upper part of the body when necessary, or, wrapped round the arm, acted as a shield in a skirmish. An ordinary red cotton handkerchief served as a head-dress, great coquetry being shown in the mode of wearing it. It was in the first place starched until almost as stiff as pasteboard, then folded across; two ends were tied on one side of the

head in a jaunty knot, whilst the others stuck up or waved about in a very saucy manner. A mouthful of cērē leaf, penang nut, and chunam, with a small quid of tobacco stuck under the upper lip, completed the appearance of Jadee. Poor fellow! he was generous to a fault, and thoughtless as a child; and when I afterwards came to know him well, I often thought how strong the similarity was between the disposition of him and his companions and the majority of our untutored seamen.

He was by birth a "Batta," or else had been stolen, at an early age, and carried off by that race from some sea-coast village. These Battas inhabit the hill country of Sumatra, and are reputed cannibals —at least, such is the charge brought against them by neighbours.

Jadee, whilst still a youth, happened to accompany a party of Battas who visited the pepper plantation of a sea-coast chieftain, for some hostile and I fear no very reputable purpose; the result was that, in a skirmish which took place, Jadee was captured, and as a slave entered upon a different career to that of living amongst the branches of trees and eating fellow-men.

Some Sooloo slave-dealers and pirates visited the district in which Jadee was detained, and he was ex-

changed for various commodities that they disposed of to his master. Made at first to row, and bale water out of their prahus, he gave such proofs of courage and address, that in a short time they advanced him to the rank of a fighting man. Jadee, however, did not like his masters, although he had an uncommon degree of respect for their enterprise and skill as sea-rovers; and after some years of strange adventures against the Chinese, Spaniards, and Dutch—the latter of whom he never spoke of without execrating the memory of their mothers—he escaped, and took service under the Rajah of Jehore, or some chief who sailed prahus from the neighbourhood of our then youthful colony of Singapore.

After a little active service, our hero found himself in possession of a perfect fortune in hard dollars and sycee silver; and to spend it in the most approved manner, proceeded to Singapore. To take unto himself a fresh wife was an easy task for such a gallant; and Jadee kept open house in the neighbourhood of Singapore, in one of those neat native huts which may still be seen raised upon piles, although far enough from the water.

The money flew fast, and, sailor-like, Jadee soon found himself compelled to take to the sea for a sub-

sistence. For a few years he led a chequered career: plenty one day—opium, curry and rice, and wives galore; then pulling at an oar like a galley-slave to win more; at last the white men spoilt his career. An expedition in which Jadee was engaged was attacked by a British man-of-war, and suffered a severe defeat. Jadee never bargained for fighting them: anything with a dark skin—let him be the Old Gentleman himself—he felt himself a match for. A Dutchman he did not mind, and a Spaniard he had often seen run; but the Orang-putihs —there was no charm, not even from the Koran, which had ever been efficacious against pirates so mighty as they. Jadee had sailed with distinguished Malay "Rajah Lauts," or Kings of the Sea, but their glory paled before the "Rajah Lauts" of the white men; they were indeed rovers whom Malay men might envy but might not imitate.

Driven with many of his companions from following up their profession in a wholesale way, Jadee and one or two roving spirits struck up a new business. They bought a fast-pulling sampan, lived at Singapore, and apart from an occasional honest fare, used at nights to waylay the market-boats and Chinese petty traders, and frighten them into paying black mail. Even this came to an end; for, one day when

asleep in his sampan, Jadee was captured by a dozen Chinese, who carried him before the authorities, and swore, by all they could swear by, that he had been caught in an act of piracy. Jadee was fairly frightened; he knew the English had a rapid way of hanging up his countrymen, and vowed to himself that he would adopt the *white men's* mode of living, if he escaped this present peril.

The judge, although a severe man, was a just one, and happily in this case suspected the veracity of the Chinese. Jadee was sent to jail to ruminate over his evil practices, and had remained there some time, when a reward was offered to anyone who would hang a Chinese murderer, the executioner having absconded. Our friend was glad to earn his liberty so easily, the more so that a Chinaman was to be the unfortunate to be operated upon.

The murderer was duly hung, and Jadee, or Jack Ketch, was free. Finding "the Company" too strong for him, Jadee wisely determined to enlist under their colours. He turned from pirate to pirate-catcher, and a more zealous, intelligent servant Governor Bonham, or the Touhan Besar*, did not possess. Jadee soon brought himself into notice, and, with one exception, on an occasion when

* "Touhan Besār," the great chief or officer.

a jealous husband thrust a spear fourteen times into Jadee's body, for certain attentions to his *cara sposa*, he had maintained an unblemished character. Such was his history.

Towards evening the rain ceased and the clouds cleared away, enabling us to see the place we had to starve into subjection.

Our gun-boats lay at the distance of about twelve hundred yards from the mouth of the river, across which a stout stockade had been formed, leaving only one narrow outlet, and there the Malays had stationed a look-out man to give an alarm in case of necessity. Within the stockade, upon the north bank of the river, stood the town and fort of Quedah.

The latter was a rectangular work built of stone, and said to have been constructed in the days when the Portuguese were in the zenith of their glory. The parapet was now sadly dilapidated, and armed with a few rusty guns, whilst on a bastion which, at one of the angles, served to flank the sea face of the works, and command the river entrance, several long formidable looking pieces of cannon were pointed threateningly at us. Beyond the fort, and on the same side of the river, a long continuation of neat-looking thatch-built houses constituted the town, and off it lay numerous trading prahus, and several *topes*,

a Malayo-Chinese vessel peculiar to the Straits of Malacca. A dense and waving jungle of trees skirted round the town and fort of Quedah, and spread away on either hand in a monotonous line of green. The country, which was said to be particularly rich in the interior, was extremely flat towards the sea-coast; and the only thing that broke its sameness was the remarkable hill which, under the name of Elephant Mount, rose above the jungle like an island from the sea. Far distant ranges of hills, the backbone of the peninsula, stretched however as a background to the scene. Slowly the setting sun tinged their peaks with rosy and purple tints, and then they gradually sank into darkness as the evening mists gathered strength along the seaward edge of the jungle, and, acted upon by light airs, sailed slowly along like phantoms: it was then night with a dew-laden atmosphere and a starlit sky.

The English seamen in the pinnace loaded the air with noise, if not with melody, by singing their sailor-songs; and the Malays, in their own peculiar way, amused themselves by singing extempore love-songs, to the melancholy accompaniment of a native drum played upon by the hand: gradually these sounds ceased, men and officers sought the *softest* planks, and, clad in blanket frocks and trousers, lay

down to sleep, and the first day of the Quedah blockade was over. During the night it rained hard, and the wet, in spite of our awnings being sloped, began to encroach upon the dry portions of the deck. I heard my men moving about; but desirous of setting an example of not being easily troubled with such a discomfort as a wet bed, I kept my place, and was not a little pleased to see Jadee bring a mat called a *kajang*, and slope it carefully over me, evidently thinking I was asleep, and then the poor fellow went away to rough it as he best could. And this man is a merciless pirate! I thought; and I felt a friendship for my Malay coxswain from that moment, which nothing will ever obliterate. With early dawn all were awake, and shortly afterwards the usual man-of-war operations of scrubbing and cleaning commenced, Jadee exhibiting as much energy amongst buckets and brooms, as if such peaceful articles were the only things he knew how to use. Leaving him to do first lieutenant's duty, I perched myself—I was but a lad of seventeen—upon the pivot-gun, and, as the different men of my crew came in sight, asked their names and characters of the interpreter. Jamboo's account of them was, to say the least of it, very unsatisfactory. One was a notorious pirate of Sumatra, another of Tringanau; those that were not pirates,

Jamboo vowed, had fled from Java, or Acheen, for acts of violence of one sort or another. Their looks were not in their favour; and walking with the peculiar strut of Malay seamen, I could not but repeat Falstaff's soliloquy:

"Nay, and the villains march wide betwixt the legs, as if they had gyves; for indeed I had most of them out of prison!"

The fears, however, of the redoubted Jamboo had much to do with the characters he gave the poor fellows; and I afterwards discovered it was rather his opinion of what they must have been, than what they really had been. I was debating in my mind how my messing was to be carried on, in a vessel manned with Mahometans, where pork was an abomination and myself an unclean animal and an infidel, when Jadee, with the most graceful bow he could muster, came to announce that the ship's company's rice and fish were cooked, and that in a few minutes *our* curry and rice would be ready. Through the interpreter, I expressed a hope that he would not depart from any religious opinions as to feeding with a Christian, because I was set in authority over him. To which the good fellow made a very neat answer, in a very modest way, that he was a servant of the same Great Rajah as the *white officer*,

and if I did not consider it beneath my dignity to eat out of the same dish as an Orang Malayu, it was not for him to do so.

This difficulty over, we sat down cross-legged to our breakfast—a mountain of snow-white rice with a curried fowl. I was at first very awkward in the use of my right hand as a substitute for spoon and fork, etiquette not allowing the left hand to be used; but I soon learnt how to pick up the rice, press it gently together between the extended fingers, and then by means of the thumb to slip what was taken up into my mouth; a drink of pure water finished the repast, and then the ever useful Campar appeared, with water and towel for us to wash our hands and mouth. We had only two meals a day; breakfast at about seven or eight o'clock, and dinner at three P.M.; rice and salt fish, or rice and curry, being the constant fare.

CHAP. IV.

The Blockade rendered more Stringent. — The Bounting Islands. — My Crew keeping Holiday. — "Hyacinths" poisoned with Ground-nuts. — We discover Wild Bees'-Nests. — Arrangements made for robbing the Hives. — The Bees quit their Hives and settle on me. — No Honey. — A Malay Doctor. — The Koran and Chunam remedy for Bee Stings.

THE first week or ten days was sadly monotonous: we had to be very guarded in our movements, as the policy intended to be pursued by the enemy had not developed itself, and we were yet ignorant of the force of armed prahus which they might possess up the river; but I was not idle, and, under Jadee's tuition, was fast learning the simple and beautiful language of Malaya. The interest taken by my serang, in repeating over for my information the Malay for every article or object upon which he saw my attention fixed for a moment, was a pretty convincing proof of the anxiety he entertained for our being able to understand one another without Jamboo's assistance.

About the middle of December, we had reason to

believe that small prahus escaped out of the river, or entered it at top of high water, by keeping close in to the jungle; and as we had ascertained that there was deep water inside the bar, it was determined to cross the bar at night, directly the tide rose high enough to allow us to do so, and to remain close off the stockade until the tide again fell, so as to compel us to retreat rather than risk an action with fort and war-prahus combined. This measure gave great umbrage to "Tonkoo Mahomet Said," who sent to warn us that we might get fired into by accident during the night, if we persisted in such a manœuvre. The reply to this threat was a promise of returning the compliment, if any such accident did occur; and after a while we found the people of Quedah submitted quietly to this stricter blockade, and it was evident that they were reserving their fighting qualities for the Siamese army, of which we only knew that it was to co-operate with us; how, or when, none could guess. The want of wood and fresh water in our little squadron obliged the senior officer to detach me to a group of islands, about twenty miles distant, in quest of some; and this job I had regularly to execute every tenth day or so. The three islands are known under the names of the Bounting Group; the Malays, with a playful fancy,

having, in the outline of one of them, seen a resemblance to a woman in that "state in which ladies wish to be who love their lords." That island is called "Bounting," and, in carrying out the idea, the next is named "Pangail" or "Call!" and the other is "Bedan" the "Accoucheur!"—a strange nomenclature, but the joke of which was evidently a great source of fun to my scamps.

Having, then, no small boats, our mode of procuring wood and water was primitive enough; the gun-boat used to be anchored in a convenient position, and then all hands, myself included, jumped overboard, swam ashore with casks and axes, and spent the day filling the former, cutting wood, bathing, and washing our clothing. It was a general holiday; and, like seamen of our own country, my Malays skylarked, joked, and played about with all the zest of schoolboys; and I observed, with no small pleasure, that, in their practical jokes or witticisms, there was none of that grossness or unbecoming language which European sailors, be their nation what it may, would assuredly have indulged in—a state of things which I imputed to the knowledge they each had of the other's quickness of temper, and the moral certainty of an appeal to the creese should an insult be intentionally given. The Bountings, though clothed with trees, and the

rankest vegetation of the East, were, like many other islands of the Malayan Archipelago, unproductive of a single wild fruit or vegetable capable of sustaining life. If the wild cocoa-nut tree or plantain had ever grown there, they had been eradicated to prevent pirates procuring refreshment on the islands—a step often pursued by the inhabitants of these buccaneer-haunted shores. Beyond turtles and their eggs on the beaches, and wild honey in the woods, nothing edible was there procurable. Some short time afterwards, however, our gallant corvette happened to be at anchor off the Bountings, and those of the crew left in her, asked permission to go on shore for a run. Uninhabited as it was, there appeared to be no reason why they should not go on shore; and the commanding officer cheerfully assented, with a self-congratulatory feeling that, at any rate, as there were there neither ladies nor grog, Jack could not get himself into trouble. "Oh! yes, by all means; you may all go," was the reply, and the jolly-boat and gig soon landed every man but the sentry and quarter-master; a parting warning was given to the worthies not to be tempted to touch any fruit, as they were poisonous. Having bathed, and washed their clothes over once or twice, by way of a jollification, and walked up and down the beaches until tired, one of

the old sailors expressed it as his opinion, that "it must be a d—d rum island, if there was nothing eatable to be found on it," and ventured a surmise, that the woods must have heaps of nuts in them, if they only knew where to find them. A young mizen-top-man jumped at the idea, and started away in search of nuts: finding none on the trees, he next sought for ground-nuts, and, as ill-luck would have it, soon found plenty, in the form of something which resembled strongly the common chesnut. Before long, all hands had had what they graphically termed 'a bowse-out," and soon afterwards became generally ill, being sick and griped to a ridiculous extent. The officers who went to bring off the liberty-men could hardly believe their senses when they found all those so recently landed hearty and well, lying about like so many sick monkeys, and almost as much frightened as hurt by their thoughtlessness. They were taken off, and strong emetics given, which added still more to the general sickness, and all night long there were ejaculations heard of "Those infernal ground-nuts!" and the unfortunate boy who had first discovered them was promised more thrashings than, it is hoped, he ever received.

My Malays, being either more experienced or less enterprising than their English comrades, contented

themselves with the honey and turtle-eggs; and as Jadee reported to me that a man called Alee had discovered a splendid wild bees' nest on Pulo Bedan, I expressed a strong desire to see the process by which the bees were robbed of their store. We happened to be standing in a wood on a part of that island, and the bees were flying about us, when I expressed this wish in my usual tone of voice. "Hush!" said Jadee, putting his finger to his lips, "hush! speak low, or the bees will hear us!" And then, in a whispering voice, he informed me that the honey would not be fit for capture for some time: and that, at any rate, it was wrong to disturb the bees except at the full of the moon. As he considered it necessary to wait for that auspicious period, I assented, and only took care at the next full moon to be there. Alee and four other Malay seamen were told off to rob the bees'-nest, and they as well as myself were soon stripped and swimming ashore. I observed that each man carried with him a small bundle of the husk of cocoa-nut shells, and directly they landed they proceeded to cut branches of a species of palm, and in the leaves enveloped the husks they had brought with them, forming the whole into articles resembling torches; a fire was then kindled upon the beach, fragments of the burn-

ing embers introduced into the heart of each torch, and then by swinging them round so as to cause a draught, the husk ignited, and, aided by the action of the green leaves, poured out of one end of the torch a solid column of smoke. The faithful Jamboo had been left on board; but I understood, from the little these Malays told me, that the torches were intended for the purpose of driving the bees away from the honey, but I did not understand that they were essential to one's safety and therefore declined to carry one when it was offered to me.

Holding the torches in their hands and standing up, the Malays next enacted some mummery or incantation, which concluded with the usual repetition of the Mahometan creed—one so beautiful and concise, that it appears a pity we cannot produce anything as graphic in our own faith.

"God he is God! and Mahomet is his Prophet!" exclaimed we all; and the torch-men leading the way, we left the pleasant shade of the jungle, and walked briskly along the shore until abreast of the bees' nest, which lay some three-quarters of a mile inland. Turning into the jungle, waving their smoke-torches, and keeping a sharp look-out for snakes, which appeared to me all the more dangerous from the novelty of my attire,—for like my men I had only

one cloth round my hips and a handkerchief over my head, — we soon sighted, up a small vista in the forest, the aged trunk of a blighted tree, which was alive with bees. Three of the Malays now sat down, waved their torches gently, throwing a halo of smoke round their tawny persons, and commenced to recite, in a slow solemn manner, some verses from the Koran, whether to keep the bees away, or to insure there being honey in the nest, I don't know; for just as I, half-laughing, was putting the question to them, the fourth Malay, Mr. Alee, walked deliberately up to the nest and applied his torch.

Thunder and lightning! a thousand lancets were suddenly plunged into my body, and a black cloud of bees were around me. I shouted for Alee; "God he is God! and Mahomet is his Prophet!" groaned out the Malays, as they waved their torches, the bees threatening them as well as myself. It was more than I could bear; with a yell of agony, I started off like a deer for the sea: it seemed but a stride to the rocks, and at once I plunged into the water, taking down many a bee which adhered tenaciously to my body and face. Keeping down as long as possible, I rose in the hope of being clear from the little brutes; but, alas! they were not so easily baffled, and a cloud of them was ready to descend upon my

devoted head: it might have ended seriously, had not Alee found that there was no honey in the nest, and he and his comrades then ran down to assist me, frightening off the bees with their torches, and accompanying me to the gun-boat, which I reached nearly blind, and rather disgusted with the result of my first Asiatic bee-hunt; the more so that, in addition to the lesson I had learnt upon the advisability of using smoke preservers, we had disproved the truth of the old axiom, that "Where there are bees, there must be honey."

Jadee was in great distress at seeing me return in such sad plight, and vowed that Alee and his companions must have been lubbers at their work; however, he promised me almost instantaneous relief, and as I was willing to accept that on any terms, one of the men, a leading hand, who, from his strict observance of his religious duties, was named the "Haggi," was sent for to cure me.

The Haggi, proud of an opportunity of displaying his medical skill upon a white man, who are all supposed to be born doctors, proceeded immediately to roll up a quid of cērē leaf, betel-nut, gambier, and chunam, in the right proportions for chewing—such a quid as a Malay so much delights in. Whilst I masticated this in the most approved manner, the Haggi

opened a small box of fine white chunam, made from the lime procured from burnt sea-shells; this chunam he carefully applied to my skin wherever it had been stung, muttering all the while, in a solemn strain, select sentences from the Koran, the responses or final portions of each chapter or sentence being taken up and repeated by my faithful coxswain, who for the time seemed desirous to entitle himself to a green turban by the fervour of his prayers, varying them, however, by shaking his tawny fist in the direction of the unconscious bees, and saying, with the utmost gravity, "Ah! you d—d pouls!"

Whether it was the chunam or the Koran cured me, it would be ingratitude to my holy friend the Haggi to say, for he stoutly maintained one to be inefficacious without the other; but this I can aver, that in a very short time all inflammation had subsided, and I was able to laugh over my adventure, making, however, a vow to bridle my curiosity for the future, where bees were in the question.

CHAP. V.

The North-east Monsoon. — Unsatisfactory News of our Siamese Allies. — The Pelicans. — Alligators abound. — The Cowardice of the Alligators. — Encounter and Capture an Alligator. — Extraordinary Strength and Vitality of those Reptiles. — A Strange Antidote against Fever. — The Rahmadan and "Quedah Opera." — The Malays endeavour to evade the Blockade. — The Watchfulness of my Native Crew.

THE north-east monsoon had fairly set in. All day long we had a delightfully pleasant breeze off the land, for the Malayan peninsula has so small a breadth, that the winds which blow upon it from the China Sea reached us before they were robbed of their moisture or heated to an unpleasant degree by the action of the land: occasionally the monsoon would freshen, for a day or so, into a double reefed top-sail breeze, or at other times become squally without rain, but our nights were invariably fine, with only just wind enough to fill the mat sails of a prahu. The sea was seldom ruffled, and more delightful weather for boat-work cannot be conceived. All we were required to do, was to guard against sleeping in the night-dews,

and by so doing, we all enjoyed better health than those cooped up in the ship.

Our new position inside Quedah bar became at last to be acknowledged by the Malays as our right, and from that time we often had communications with the fishermen who came out to visit their fishing-weirs. Through them we learnt that fighting was going on with the Siamese, a long distance off: according to their version, the Malay rajahs were everywhere victorious; several large towns and many slaves had fallen into their hands, and there was no probability of a Siamese army being able to act upon the offensive during that monsoon.

This was decidedly very cheerless news, but the authority was a questionable one; and we could see slight defensive preparations taking place in the fort, which betokened something else than entire confidence and security.

Meantime, each day brought with it novelty and amusement. Anchored as we now were, within the river and close to the stockade, broad mud-banks extended themselves on either hand whenever the tide was low. Asiatic birds and reptiles haunted these banks; some of the former, such as the snipe and curlew, were well known to us, and, until scared away, added to our daily fare. The pelicans, at first,

were the sole robbers of the fishing-weirs, but they soon found themselves no match for the expert seamen of the pinnace and gun-boats, and left us for some other spot. The alligators, however, were not to be frightened, although they took uncommonly good care not to enter into any of the personal combats upon the mud which the Malays, and after them the English sailors, were constantly trying to entrap them into. The numbers of these loathsome brutes to be seen at a time was extraordinary; but whatever might be the danger of falling in with them, if wading or swimming alone through these waters, there was no doubt of their being arrant cowards when fallen in with on shore. With the rising tide, the alligators generally found their way up to the edge of the jungle, and there lay among the roots of the trees (which they strongly resembled), as if waiting for cattle, or wild animals, that might come down to drink: we, however, never saw them catch anything during a period of several months. The ebbing tide would often thus leave the brutes several hundred yards from the edge of the water, and very much they appeared to enjoy themselves when so left, with an Indian sun pouring down upon their tough hides; and, as if in the very height of the *dolce far niente*, they would open back their hideous

jaws, and remain in that position for more than an hour at a time. As to trying to shoot them, we soon found it mere waste of time, as well as of powder and ball; for, mortally wounded or not, they invariably carried themselves far beyond our reach. The Malay sailors showed us how, at any rate, we could frighten the alligators exceedingly, even if we could not capture them — by landing lightly equipped with a sharp spear or boarding-pike, and thus obliging the reptile to make a long *détour* to escape being assailed. Occasionally I have seen the men, by dint of great activity, get near enough to fling their weapon and strike the alligators; but as in such cases they invariably struck the upper part of the back, they might as well have tried to spear a rock. The natives showed the utmost indifference to the presence of alligators in their neighbourhood, and, when questioned upon the subject, asserted that in salt or brackish water, at the mouths of rivers, the alligator was never dangerous to man; and that it was only up rivers, and in marshy places, where they lived, as it were, amongst human beings, that they screwed up their courage to indulge in such a dangerous luxury as eating men or women.

Of the enormous strength and extraordinary vitality of these reptiles, we had a pretty good

proof; for one evening, when the pinnace, as usual, dropped alongside the weir to take out fish for the evening meal, the men who went into the "pocket" to see what had been caught, were obliged to move their legs nimbly to escape the gin-like jaws of a good-sized alligator which had got into the weir after the fish, and, having devoured them, could not escape. The pinnace-men cheered with delight, and proceeded at once to capture the prisoner. It was, however, a good tough job: the brute, some ten or twelve feet long, lay in the bottom of an enclosed space of about equal diameter; the water was about three feet deep, and extremely muddy, rendered more so by the splashings and convulsions of the animal. Attempts were at first made to thrust sharp boarding-pikes down through his hide; and from the height the seamen stood over the creature, and the weight they were able to bring to bear upon the pikes, it appeared probable that some weak spot would be found. But, no; although sometimes eight or nine powerful men pressed down with as many pikes, the brute did not suffer a scratch; and, incredible as it may appear, more than one of our boarding-pikes, strong as they are, were bent in the neck. It was evident that a soft spot must be sought for under his "calipash," as, in imitation of turtle, the men called his upper

coat of armour. Every man armed himself with some weapon or other, and stirred up the alligator with a vengeance. He became perfectly furious, and lashed about his tail and snapped his jaws in a very spiteful manner: the fun waxed warm; the "click" of the teeth as the mouth closed, sounded uncommonly unpleasant, apart from the cracking of boat-hook staffs, and other articles, as if they were mere twigs. At last a good noose was slipped over the creature's head and hauled tight round his neck; this enabled the seamen to administer a multitude of wounds which would have let its life out had it had more than the usual number. But it was a long time before it was deemed sufficiently safe to be hauled out of the weir, and towed to one of the gun-boats to be dissected and skinned: and even then the muscular action of portions of the body, the tail especially, whilst being cut into pieces, was something extraordinary, and denoted how strong is the vitality of all this reptile tribe. I, and others, tasted a cutlet of alligator's flesh, and although it was not particularly nice, still there was nothing about it disagreeable: some compared it to very bad veal cutlets; for my part, it tasted very much as turtle collops would, which is not saying much in its favour.

Observing the "Haggi" in quest of something,

I watched my surgical friend, and found him carefully cutting open the head, to extract the brain. Through Jamboo, I asked what purpose it was to be applied to, and was informed, with a solemn shake of the head that would have qualified the Haggi for the College of Physicians, that "it was an invaluable remedy for all fevers!" I need not say that, great as my faith was in the Koran and chunam-box of the holy mariner, I determined not to go through a course of alligator brains, come what might. Prior to our Christmas Day, the Mahometan fast*, or Lent, took place. Our Malays kept it in a particularly lax manner; but our opponents in Quedah appeared to be far more orthodox, their devotions finding vent in a magnificent chaunt by male voices, which, heard in all the lonely stillness of a tropical night, was deeply impressive. Jadee assured me that the performers were men of undoubted sanctity, having all made the pilgrimage to Mecca, and kissed the tomb of their prophet, without which qualification they could not take part in what the English seamen sacrilegiously styled the "Quedah Opera." The conclusion of the fast was a general holiday in the

* During the month of Rahmadan, the Mussulman abstains from eating or drinking, smoking, or pleasure, from sunrise to sunset.

town and fort; a constant saluting and cheering took place, and men, women, and children were dressed in holiday attire, giving a great deal more animation to the tumble-down fort and the devoted town than we were wont to see them assume.

Then came our Christmas. The "Hyacinth" ran down to the Bountings, and captured some very fine turtle. Turtle-soup and plum-pudding galore were prepared; and, like a hen gathering her chicks, we all sailed off from our blockading posts, and tumbled on board the dear old craft in time for an early dinner.

The Malay sailors got a holiday and a double allowance of rice and fish, and paid all due respect to the "white man's feast," whilst we talked over our adventures with shipmates and messmates, and hoped and prophesied for the future. As the evening closed in, all boat's crews were again piped away, and we rowed into Quedah, keeping time to the tune of some sentimental ditty, in which the lady of the sailor's love

> "Was a rich merchant's daughter,
> From London she did come," &c. &c.;

and winding up with a *dénouement* far more comical than moral.

Yet was our duty not all play or sight-seeing. The Malays in Quedah had to dispose of their produce at Penang, and procure, in return, arms, powder, and salt, and our duty was to prevent them. Whenever the night tides were high, combined with a misty state of the atmosphere likely to cover their escape through our cordon, prahus would push out, and, by keeping close under the shadow of the jungle, strive to escape our vigilance. Their lofty mat sails caught the faintest breath of land-breeze, the beautifully sharp bow of the prahus made hardly a ripple as it cut through the water, and it required the keenest eye to detect them when stealing thus along in silence and shadow. The quick sight and hearing of our Malays was in this respect invaluable: they had themselves been engaged in similar feats, and knew all the tricks of their compatriots. On more than one occasion did the look-out man call me at night, when, although a clear sky overhead, nothing but the tops of the trees could be seen peering over a white mist which poured like smoke out of the unhealthy mangrove swamps. "A prahu!" the man would say, pointing into the mist, making a sign at the same time to listen. Holding my head low down and horizontally, I could at last distinguish what had caught the Malay's attention — a low creak occasion-

ally, which I most decidedly should have thought to be the swaying of some branch in the forest, had he not assured me that it was the action of a prahu's oar in a rattan grummet.* At other times a rippling sound, such as water will make when running past any fixed object, was wafted on the night wind. "It is merely the tide running past the fishing-weirs, Jamboo," I might perhaps say. "Oh no, sir!" he would reply, "the look-out man assures me the sound is altering its position, and that it 's the stem of a prahu cutting through the water." Silently and stealthily, but quickly, as men who had been all their lives at such work, the crew would be on their legs. "Baughan! semoa-secalar, hancat sown!" in a low and distinct whisper, would run along the deck; or, in other words, "Arouse,! hands up anchor!" The anchor would be run up gently, and Numero Tega would be after her prey like a night-hawk. We had to deal, however, with keen hands and fast boats; and often have I chased to early dawn before being sure of my prize.

* "Grummet," the piece of rope used for attaching an oar to the rowing-pin.

CHAP. VI.

A Night Chase after a Prahu. — The Chase. — The Prahu manœuvres admirably. — Jadee volunteers to board her. — The Capture. — A Piratical Saint. — The Saint at Prayers. — The Saint's Deportment. — The Saint's Martyrdom. — Defensive Measures. — Escape of Siamese Prisoners. — Sufferings of the Siamese Prisoners. — A curious Mode of Sketching.

THE pluck and zeal of my crew often struck me, but never perhaps more than on the occasion I am about to relate.

We had had a long and unsuccessful chase one day after a fast-pulling prahu, and the crew being much exhausted, I anchored for the night at the mouth of a small river called the Furlong, about two miles north of Quedah fort. Heartily tired with the past day's exertion, all my crew soon dropped asleep, except the usual look-out man, and I donned my blanket frock and trousers, and threw myself on the deck to rest. About ten o'clock I was aroused by a fine old one-eyed fellow called "Souboo,"

"Touhan!"* whispered he, "a large two-masted prahu has just sailed past us!" "Where?—in what direction?" I asked. "To leeward, sir!" said Souboo, as he dropped upon his knees and peered along the water, over which the night mists were moving; "there she is—a real 'capel prahu,' and sailing very fast." To up anchor and make sail to the land-breeze did not take many minutes; the sweeps were manned, and the guns cleared for action.

Whilst my little craft was flying through the water, I questioned Souboo as to how it was he first got sight of the prahu. "The wind was rather along the land than off it," said he, "and I was watching the mouth of the river, when suddenly happening to turn my head to seaward, I saw a prahu come out of the mist and almost tumble on board of us, as she hauled in for the stream; but in a minute her course was changed, and she bore up for the southward with flowing sheets."

"All right," exclaimed Jadee, "we will have her—there is a twenty-mile run for her to the Bountings, and before that ground is gone over the fog will have cleared off and the wind fail." "How if she

* Touhan, in this sense, was equivalent to "Sir;" it is generally used as Mr. would be in English.

hauls up, and goes to the northward?" I suggested. "No Malay man tries to sail against the wind with a prahu, when the white man is in chase of him, Touhan!" said Jadee; "and if Souboo's description of this vessel is correct, she is one of the war-prahus of Mahomet Alee's fleet!"

Under this pleasing anticipation, Jadee got quite excited; and I must say I joined in the feeling, as the gun-boat listed to the breeze, and her dashing crew bent with a will to their oars. The zealous Campar handed to Jadee the longest and ugliest creese in his stock, and I observed all the men stick their short knives in their girdles ready for a fray. "No prahu yet!" I exclaimed, after running two or three miles through the mist. "We will catch her!" responded Jadee; and almost as he said the word, we seemed to be aboard of a large-sized prahu, running the same way as ourselves. There was a yell of delight from the Number *Threes*, as my crew styled themselves, and one as of astonishment from the prahu; but in a moment she, what is termed, jibbed her sails, and slipped out of sight again before we could dip our heavy yards and lug-sails. Altering our course so as to intercept her in her evident intention to seek a hiding-place in the Bounting Islands, the bow-gun was cleared away and

loaded with grape, ready to knock away her masts when another opportunity offered. Again we ran almost upon her, our sails being at the time boomed out "wing and wing." "Lower your sails, and surrender!" Jadee shouted, as I fired, and brought down her mainsail. For a minute her capture seemed certain; but we had to deal with no novice. As we shot past the prahu, going nearly eight knots, she dropped her foresail, put her helm hard down, and long before our sails could be furled and the gun-boat's head got round, the villanous prahu was out of sight astern. I fancy I swore; for Jadee called the lost prize a "d—d poul," which she most decidedly was not, and added that he evidently was "a pig! and would not fight."

We still determined to adhere to our original course, confident of the prahu having no shelter nearer than the islands, and were rewarded as the mist cleared away by again sighting her. I soon saw that we were by far the faster sailer with the fresh breeze then blowing, and determined not to let her escape me this time. I proposed, if three or four men would follow me, to jump on board of her, and prevent her escape, until the gun-boat got fairly alongside. Jadee at once seized the idea, and only so far altered it as to persuade me, through the

assistance of the interpreter, that the Malays in the prahu would be more likely to surrender quietly to a countryman who could assure them of quarter, than they would be at the sight of a naval officer, when fright alone might make them run a muck, and cause a needless loss of life.

Accordingly, Jadee and his three boarders stood ready at the bow, and, looking at them as they stood on the gunwale, eagerly eyeing the prahu as we rushed at her, they would have made a fine study for a painter. They were nearly naked, with the exception of a sarong wrapped round the left arm, to ward off such blows as might be aimed at them; in the waist-belt, across the small of their backs, each had stuck his creese, and a sharp short cutlass dangled from their wrists. Strange sights indeed do travellers see! but, for disinterested devotion and bravery, I question whether a finer example could be shown than that of these dark-skinned subjects of Queen Victoria.

As we closed the prahu, no answer was returned to our hail to surrender. "All ready!" said Jadee, swinging himself almost out of the rigging with eagerness. "Look out!" I shouted, and fired again at the sails. The prahu repeated her old manœuvre, but we checkmated her this time, for as our side

scraped her stern, Jadee and his followers leapt into her with a shout. Our sails were down in a trice, and we swept alongside of the prize; and, having heard so much as I had done of the desperate character of Malays, I was not a little delighted to find that they had, in this case, surrendered without resistance, directly Jadee made himself master of their helm, and announced his intention, with a vicious wave of his abominable creese, to maintain it against all comers until the gun-boat got alongside.

The vessel had been a war-prahu; but her breast-work for the guns had been removed, and, in the peaceful character of a trader, she was, we afterwards found, employed to keep up the communication between the Malay chieftains in Quedah province and their friends in Penang. The emissary upon this occasion we made a prisoner of; the vessel we respected as a trader, but forced her to return into Quedah.

The prisoner was a Malay of good extraction, and, having performed the pilgrimage to Mecca, wore the distinguished decoration of a considerable quantity of green calico about his head; apart from his sanctity, he was, as his able efforts to escape had proved, an expert sailor, and, doubtless, a most worthy member of his piratical fraternity. There

was something about the man particularly commanding. He was tall and slight for a Malay, and bore, like many of the higher caste in Malaya do, marks of Arab blood in his veins; his face would have been good looking but for the high and square cheek-bones, and a fierce expression of the eye; a small Vandyke-shaped beard, which was a mark of his holy rank, and a certain dignity of manner, showed him one accustomed to command; and it amused me to see with what self-possession he was prepared, although my prisoner, to exercise his authority upon my men, who instinctively obeyed him as they would do their master.

I did not, however, show any great awe for his piratical saintship, much to Jadee's astonishment; for although my coxswain's knowledge of the creed of the faithful was but a mere glimmering, still he had vague superstitious fears about it, which would have made me laugh had Jadee not been so much in earnest about them. Out of consideration for Jadee's fears as to the evil consequences likely to arise through the imprisoned Haggi's influence with divers demons, spirits, *et cetera*, I consented that, whenever the position of the gun-boat brought the direction of the prophet's tomb over the stern, the Haggi might, in pursuance of the established form of Mahomet-

anism, bring his carpet on the quarter-deck, and pray; at other times he was to remain forward. Accordingly, at the hour of prayer, the pirate-saint would stalk along to the stern of the gun-boat, spread his little carpet, turn towards Mecca, or, rather, the direction in which it lay, and then, indifferent to who were looking at him, or whatever might be going on, enter upon his devotions with a zeal and abstraction from the little world around him which could not but command admiration from men of any creed. His orisons finished, he returned to his place with the dignity of a rajah.

He never made the slightest effort to conciliate either my good-will or that of any of my crew. I was evidently a Giaour, an infidel, and the Malays around me renegades; but I rather admired him for this independence, and took good care nothing should occur to offend his religious scruples, so far as he personally was concerned. Perhaps, in time, we should have appreciated each other better; for, on my one day notifying to him that he was to proceed to Penang, to stand upon his trial before Governor Bonham, he relaxed for a few minutes, clasped both hands together, made a low bow, and "Hoped God would be with me, and that I should walk in health!" expressions which I cordially returned;

and so we parted. From what I afterwards heard, I had reason to believe the "Company Sahib" had a long account with this holy man, and that, with some others, he was to be seen in after years innocently employed sweeping and keeping in order the fortifications of Fort William at Calcutta. A bevy of houris in the world to come will doubtless reward him for the injury he has suffered from the infidel in this.

Towards the commencement of the new year, our attention was called to a strong working party being seen every day to leave the fort, and proceed to clear away the jungle which had grown up close round the works; this done, they commenced the construction of an admirable battery, which flanked our anchorage as well as the landward side of Quedah fort. Observing that this working party was strongly guarded, we learnt, on inquiry from the fishermen, that the labourers were unfortunate Siamese — men, women, and children — who had been captured when the province was conquered by the Malays, and that the work they were now doing was merely to keep them out of mischief. We, however, plainly saw that the chiefs had some cause for anxiety, and anticipated an attack, though how or whence we had as yet no certain intelligence. We took some pains to get information carried to these poor creatures of

our readiness to give them shelter, and shortly afterwards two Siamese effected their escape under difficult circumstances. The musquito squadron were just on the point of separating to take up their stations for the night—a step we always took care to carry out after dark, in order that the enemy might not know our position—when a voice was heard to hail us from a long tongue of mud which ran out to seaward from the northern point of the river. At first it was supposed to be the whoop of a night-hawk, but it was repeated, and our men declared it to be the voice of either Chinese or Siamese. Mr. Jamboo was called for, and, in a dialect which was so unmusical as to resemble the sounds emitted by knocking two hard pieces of wood together, he soon ascertained that they were two Siamese men who had escaped from the Malays, and in an attempt to cross the mud-flat had sunk into it exhausted, and unless we could reach them would assuredly be drowned or devoured by the alligators upon the return of the tide. The pinnace was now forced in as near as possible to the mud-bank, and three or four of the English seamen having volunteered to assist the unfortunates, they stripped themselves, and aided by oars and boards slipped over the mud to where the Siamese were fairly bogged, pulled

them out by sheer strength and activity, and brought them off amidst the cheers of all our party. The blue-jackets washed them, and clothed their shivering frames in sailors' frocks and trousers, persuaded them to drink a glass of raw Jamaica rum each, and then, with considerable truth, said, half-laughing, "Why, Jack, your mother would not know you!" —a remark the Siamese would probably have acquiesced in, had they understood the rough but good-natured fellows.

The tale of the Siamese was soon told: they were father and son, and had originally entered the province of Quedah from the neighbourhood of Bankok. At the time of the Malay inroad, the father was a petty merchant, barber, and painter, at an island called Lancávi. They were made prisoners, or rather slaves; worked like horses, starved, and constantly saw their countrymen creesed before their eyes. They escaped, stole a boat, and sailed with her across to the mainland, by following the coast of which they knew they must reach English territory. At last they observed our ship in the offing, and rightly conjecturing that some of her boats would be found off Quedah, had happily succeeded in reaching us without being seen by the lynx-eyed look-outs of Quedah.

They stayed some days with us, and appeared anxious to evince their gratitude in every possible way. The old man, as a Siamese artist, presented each officer with specimens of his skill; the most remarkable point in his sketches being the fact of his wonderful departure from all our preconceived notions of drawing.

For instance, in a pencil sketch of Buddha, drawn for me, in which that divinity is represented reposing upon one leg, and looking uncommonly like Canova's famed figure of a dancing-girl reposing, and almost as unnatural, the draughtsman commenced with the *toes* and worked gradually up to the gorgeous head-dress, yet preserving a just proportion in all the parts of the figure; as a whole, the result may be said to have been more curious than pleasing. When the Siamese eventually proceeded to Penang, they left us favourably impressed with their disposition and ability, although they evidently lacked the energy of character which marked the Malays about us.

CHAP. VII.

The Anxiety of the Officer commanding the Blockade. — Intelligence received of the Pirate Fleet. — My good Fortune in sailing with so excellent a Captain. — A Tropical Thunderstorm. — Jadee kills the Wind. — How Jadee learnt to kill the Wind. — The Dutch generally disliked. — Jadee's Piratical Friends attack a Junk. — The Defeat and Flight of Jadee's Friends. — They are saved by the Rajah of Jehore. — Killing the Wind.

Our enterprising captain in the "Hyacinth" had, as it may be supposed, a very anxious time. The extent of coast to be blockaded was not less than fifty or sixty miles in extent much of it but little known; numerous islands, rivers, and creeks existed of which charts and surveyors had no cognizance. He knew well that a large force of prahus and armed men were in the province; their exact whereabouts, however, was preserved a perfect secret, and Captain Warren's fear was, lest they should fall upon his boats or the gun-boats with vastly superior forces, and carry off an easy victory. The "Hyacinth" therefore, like a troubled spirit, was ever flitting up and

down between Quedah and a spot of equal importance called the Parlis River, situated twenty miles farther north, and in the entrance of which the ship's cutter and No. 1. gun-boat, the Diamond, were stationed. In the second week of January, information was received that a considerable number of the war-prahus seen by us at Trang during the previous autumn, had succeeded, under their renowned leader, Datoo Mahomet Alee, in getting into the Parlis River, and were employed in the defence of that neighbourhood. It became therefore necessary to reinforce the Parlis blockading force, and I was ordered to proceed there for that purpose. Delighted at the prospect of seeing more of this interesting country, my craft was soon under weigh and spinning along the coast, which, to the northward of Quedah River, rapidly improved in appearance; the picturesque group of islands known as the Lancavas, and beyond them the Laddas, lying to seaward, and spurs of mountain land from the central chain approaching close to the coast of the mainland.

All, at any rate, was bright and beautiful to me: placed, young as I was, in a position of trust and responsibility; enjoying all the sweets of command, and still too young to feel its anxieties, it was indeed the sunny side of the world that I was then enjoying;

and as, with a throbbing pulse and zealous heart, I walked my own quarter-deck, how earnest, in all the honesty of youth, were my resolutions to deserve well of my profession, and those set in authority over me. Fortunate are those boys who, like me, sail their first trip as embryo admirals with such a captain as mine was; a gentleman in all things; labouring in his profession quietly and earnestly; not, upon the one hand, scorning it as being beneath his birth or abilities; or, upon the other, degrading himself into a mere menial, and working for the dirty pounds, shillings, and pence it would yield him. The midshipman who sails and learns his profession with such a man may perhaps, in after life, suffer when he happens to be under the tyrant, schemer, or bully—for, alas! such will be found in every noble profession; but those principles early acquired will ever be a solace to him, and the love and recollection of such a man console him and cheer him in the hope of emulating his example.

As we approached a long low point named Tangong Bouloo, or the Cape of Bamboos, from the numbers of those canes which were waving gracefully over it, my attention was called to the necessity of preparing for a heavy squall which was rapidly sweeping down towards us from the distant hills.

As the wind freshened, we reduced canvass until the "Emerald" was flying along under a close-reefed foresail, everything cracking withal. The squall swept on; a dense black mass of clouds, charged with electricity, a burst of thunder which seemed to make the gun-boat tremble to her very keel, and a vivid flash of lightning which blinded one for a minute, showed how close it was. The tall trees bent to the gale, the bamboos were swept down like a long row of feathers, and a white streak of foam rushed towards us as we took in our sail, and prepared to receive it under bare poles. With a shriek it struck us; the little "Emerald" lay down to it for a moment, the helm was put up, and away she flew before the storm like a snow-flake. Jadee stood by my side, "A bad wind, Touhan; we must kill it!" "Kill away! Jadee," I replied, laughing at the idea of so fickle a personage as the Clerk of the Weather getting into a scrape with a Malay pirate,—"kill away, by all means!" "Campar!" shouted Jadee—poor Campar! he had to be everywhere—"oh! Campar, thou son of a burnt mother, hand here the rice-spoon!" shouted Jadee, looking as solemn as a quaker or a haggi. This rice-spoon, by the way, was the only one in the vessel; it was made of wood, and used for stirring the rice whilst cooking over the fire; its value to us may-be

invested it with a certain degree of sanctity. The spoon was brought, and I tried to look as solemn as Jadee, who, calling to his aid the sanctimonious Alee, placed the spoon upon the deck between him and the wind, and the pair of true believers repeated some verses over it—bound themselves, by a vow, to sacrifice several game-cocks* upon a favourable occasion, and then the precious spoon was stuck through the lanyards of the main rigging, with the handle to leeward. I think I should have died from the effects of suppressed mirth, had not the fury of the squall and the quantity of water thrown on board of us given me enough to do to look after the safety of the craft. Jadee, however, sat quietly watching and waiting for the effect of his incantation: at last, down came the rain, not in drops, but in bucketsful, and, as usual, the wind fell entirely. Hastening to get under the rain-awnings and mats until the weather cleared up, I remarked to Jadee that "the wind was fairly killed." "Yes!" he replied, with a sly expression of countenance, "I never saw that charm fail; I never saw the wind that could long stand its effect. The Rajah of Jehore was the first man who taught it to me, and I have found it infal-

* I fancy from game-cocks being introduced into this superstitious observance, that it is purely of Malay origin.

lible. If Jamboo was here, Touhan, I'd tell you how it happened." Jamboo was at once sent for; and making a proviso that my coxswain should speak slowly and distinctly, so as to enable me to call in the interpreter's aid as little as possible, he proceeded to tell his tale, somewhat as follows:—

"Long before that action with the English man-of-war which drove me to Singapore, I sailed in a fine fleet of prahus belonging to the Rajah of Jehore.* We were all then very rich—ah! such numbers of beautiful wives, and such feasting!—but, above all, we had a great many most holy men in our force! When the proper monsoon came, we proceeded to sea to fight the Bugismen and Chinamen bound from Borneo and the Celebes to Java; for you must remember our Rajah was at war with them (Jadee always maintained that the proceedings in which he had been engaged partook of a purely warlike, and not of a piratical character).

"Our thirteen prahus had all been fitted out in and about Singapore. I wish you could have seen them, Touhan! These prahus we see here are nothing to

* I have said the Rajah of Jehore; but Jadee called the individual by some peculiar term not easily spelt, and described his place of abode and hiding-place as being near Cape Romania, in the Jehore district.

them;—such brass guns; such long pendants; such creeses! Allah-il-Allah! our Datoos were indeed great men!

"Sailing along the coast up as high as Patani, we then crossed over to Borneo, two Illanoon prahus acting as pilots, and reached a place called Sambas: there we fought the Chinese and Dutchmen, who ill-treat our countrymen, and are trying to drive the Malays out of that country. Gold-dust and slaves in large quantities were here taken; most of the latter being our countrymen of Sumatra and Java, who are captured and sold to the planters and miners of the Dutch settlements."

"Do you mean to say," I asked, "that the Dutch countenance such traffic?"

"The Hollanders," replied Jadee, "have been the bane of the Malay race; no one knows the amount of villany, the bloody cruelty of their system towards us. They drive us into our prahus to escape their taxes and their laws, and then declare us pirates, and put us to death. There are natives in our crew, Touhan, of Sumatra and Java, of Bianca and Borneo; ask them why they hate the Dutchmen; why they would kill a Dutchman. It is because the Dutchman is a false man, not like the white man (English). The Hollander stabs in the dark: he

is a liar! However, from Borneo we sailed to Biliton and Bianca, and there waited for some large junks that were expected. Our cruise had been so far successful, and we feasted away,—fighting cocks, smoking opium, and eating white rice. At last our scouts told us that a junk was in sight. She came; a lofty-sided one of Fokien. We knew those Amoy men would fight like tiger-cats for their sugar and silks; and, as the breeze was fresh, we only kept her in sight by keeping close in shore and following her. Not to frighten the Chinamen, we did not hoist sail, but made our slaves pull. Oh!" said Jadee, warming up with the recollection of the event,—"oh! it was fine to feel what brave fellows we then were!

"Towards night we made sail, and closed upon the junk, and at daylight it fell a stark calm, and we went at our prize like sharks. All our fighting men put on their war dresses; the Illanoons danced their war dance, and all our gongs sounded, as we opened out to attack her on different sides.

"But those Amoy men are pigs! They burnt joss-paper, sounded their gongs, and received us with such showers of stones, hot water, long pikes, and one or two well-directed shots, that we hauled off to try the effect of our guns; sorry though we were to

...ATTACKED BY MANY TRAD...

do it; for it was sure to bring down the Dutchmen upon us. Bang! bang! we fired at them, and they at us; three hours did we persevere, and whenever we tried to board, the Chinese beat us back every time, for her side was as high and smooth as a wall, with galleries overhanging. We had several men killed and hurt; a council was called; a certain charm was performed by one of our holy men, a famous chief, and twenty of our best men devoted themselves to effecting a landing on the junk's deck, when our look-out prahus made the signal that the Dutchmen were coming; and sure enough some Dutch gun-boats came sweeping round a headland. In a moment we were round and pulling like demons for the shores of Biliton, the gun-boats in chase of us, and the Chinese howling with delight. The sea-breeze freshened, and brought up a schooner-rigged boat very fast: we had been at work twenty-four hours, and were heartily tired; our slaves could work no longer, so we prepared for the Hollanders; they were afraid to close upon us, and commenced firing at a distance. This was just what we wanted; we had guns as well as they, and, by keeping up the fight until dark, we felt sure of escape. The Dutchmen, however, knew this too, and kept closing gradually upon us, and when they saw our prahus

baling out water and blood, they knew we were suffering, and cheered like devils. We were desperate; surrender to Dutchmen we never would: we closed together for mutual support, and determined at last, if all hope ceased of escape, to run our prahus ashore, burn them, and lie hid in the jungle until a future day. But a brave Datoo, with his shattered prahu, saved us; he proposed to let the Dutchmen board her, creese all that did so, and then trust to Allah for his escape.

"It was done immediately; we all pulled a short distance away, and left the brave Datoo's prahu like a wreck abandoned. How the Dutchmen yelled, and fired into her! The slaves and cowards jumped out of the prahu, but our braves kept quiet; at last, as we expected, one gun-boat dashed alongside of their prize, and boarded her in a crowd: then was the time to see how the Malay man could fight; the creese was worth twenty swords, and the Dutchmen went down like sheep. We fired to cover our countrymen, who, as soon as their work was done, jumped overboard, and swam to us; but the brave Datoo, with many more, died, as brave Malays should do, running a muck against a host of enemies.

"The gun-boats were quite scared by this punishment, and we lost no time in getting as rapidly away

as possible; but the accursed schooner, by keeping more in the offing, held the wind, and preserved her position, signalling all the while for the gun-boats to follow her. We did not want to fight any more; it was evidently an unlucky day. On the opposite side of the channel to that we were on, the coral reefs and shoals would prevent the Hollanders following us: it was determined at all risks to get there in spite of the schooner. With the first of the land-wind in the evening, we set sail before it, and steered across for Bianca. The schooner placed herself in our way like a clever sailor, so as to turn us back; but we were determined to push on, take her fire, and run all risks.

"It was a sight to see us meeting one another; but we were desperate: we had killed plenty of Dutchmen; it was their turn now. I was in the second prahu, and well it was so; for when the headmost one got close to the schooner, the Dutchman fired all his guns into her, and knocked her at once into a wrecked condition. We gave one cheer, fired our guns, and then pushed on for our lives. Ah! sir, it was a dark night indeed for us. Three prahus in all were sunk, and the whole force dispersed. To add to our misfortunes, a strong gale sprang up. We were obliged to carry canvass; our prahu leaked from

shot-holes; the sea continually broke into her; we dared not run into the coral reefs on such a night, and bore up for the Straits of Malacca. The wounded writhed and shrieked in their agony, and we had to pump, we fighting men, and bale like *black fellows!* By two in the morning, we were all worn out. I felt indifferent whether I was drowned or not, and many threw down their buckets, and sat down to die. The wind increased, and at last, as if to put us out of our misery, just such a squall as this came down upon us. I saw it was folly contending against our fate, and followed the general example. 'God is great!' we exclaimed; but the Rajah of Jehore came and reproved us: 'Work until daylight,' he said, 'and I will ensure your safety.' We pointed at the black storm which was approaching. 'Is that what you fear?' he replied, and, going below, he produced just such a wooden spoon, and did what you have seen me do; and I tell you, my captain, as I would if the 'Company Sahib' stood before me, that the storm was nothing, and that we had a dead calm one hour afterwards, and were saved. God is great, and Mahomet is his Prophet!—but there is no charm like the Jehore one for killing the wind!"

It did not take as long to tell as it does to write

this odd tale; and it would be impossible to try to give an idea of how my coxswain's feelings were carried away with the recital of his narrative, or how genuine and child-like the credulity of the old pirate. I wrote it down as a strange episode in Malay life, and possibly the prescription may get me a medal from the College of Physicians, even if it should be declared valueless by European navigators in general.

CHAP. VIII.

Refreshing effects of a Squall in the Tropics. — Scenery in the Malay Archipelago. — My Gun-boat "The Emerald" joins the Parlis Blockading Squadron. — The Malays try to Stockade us out of the River. — Haggi Loūng comes on an Embassy. — Malayan Diplomacy. — Jadee's disregard for a Flag of Truce. — Jadee and the one-eyed Enemy. — A Spy. — The Chase by Starlight. — The submerged Jungle. — An Indian Night-Scene. — The Chase lost. — The Whip and Mangrove Snakes.

AGAIN we made sail and sped on our way. How nature revives in those equatorial climes, after the revivifying effect of such a squall as we had just experienced! Animate and inanimate objects gain fresh life as it were from the action of the passing storm; the very sea glittered in the sunlight with a brighter and a deeper blue, and the forest-clad sides of the surrounding mountains looked even more gorgeous than was their wont, as they shone in all the thousand shades of which green and gold are susceptible. Away to the northward stretched a labyrinth of islands of every size and shape — some

still wrapt in storm-clouds, others bathed in refulgent light, or softened by distance into "summer isles of Eden lying in dark purple spheres of sea." In short, it realised at such a moment all one's brightest dreams of the East; and it required but little imagination to people it with bloody pirates and fleet-footed prahus, in warring with whom I amongst others was to win bright honour.

At the base of a range of hills which bound the broad valley of Quedah on the north, the river Parlis discharges itself over a bar into the Indian Ocean. I hauled in for it, and soon had the satisfaction of shaking the gallant Barclay by the hand.

The river at its mouth was divided, by a small island half a mile long, into two branches. This island, called "Pulo Quetam," or Crab Island, by the natives, served for a dockyard, drying-ground, and place of recreation to our little force, and, together with the fact of a large fleet of war-prahus being up the river, under the command of one of the most enterprising of pirates, gave to the blockade here a degree of interest which Quedah did not possess.

Our force consisted of two gun-boats and a ship's cutter, carrying altogether four guns, and about seventy men. The Malays far outnumbered us,

and Datoo Mahomet Alee had sent a derisive message, to say he could and should go in or out of the river whenever it suited his convenience. The consequence was, we lived in momentary expectation of a tough action with a set of heroes who had already fought the boats of H. M. S. "Zebra" and "Rose" on former occasions, and allowed them no decided advantage.

During the day we used to lie together in the northern entrance of the river, but at night I was detached to blockade the southern branch, and prevent all ingress and egress by even the fishermen. Until the arrival of the "Emerald" this measure had been impracticable, and it gave great umbrage to the enemy. A pangleman, or petty chief, was therefore sent down from the town of Parlis, situated twelve miles up the stream, to try and induce us to desist. The ambassador was not wanting in skill. He said that Muhomet Alee sent all health to the officer in command of the English gun-boats, and begged to assure him that the presence of a vessel in the south branch of the river was an unnecessary measure, and an act of discourtesy which he hoped would cease. He knew from experience that *white men* (Orang-putihs) never wantonly frightened women or children, but that my vessel rowing round to her

station every night had only that effect! The pangleman alluded here to the inhabitants of a small village, situated in the fork of the river, which I had to pass nightly.

Lastly, Mahomet Ali begged to remind us that such a ridiculous force as we were, was merely tolerated, and that we should not do as we liked.

Mr. Barclay, our senior officer, gave a concise answer. That he should do his duty as he pleased, and that the women and children would cease to fear when they found we did them no harm; and lastly, the sooner Datoo Mahomet Ali put his threat into execution the better pleased we should all be.

We never understood what Mahomet Ali's real motive was; but as if to show us that he did not care about the south channel being open or not, he took advantage of my absence one night, whilst chasing a prahu, to send a strong party of men down, who actually stockaded that branch entirely across, much to the astonishment of my brother officer, who found it completed in the morning. I was told of it on my return, and he gave me full permission to do what I pleased, to show our indifference to the authority or temper of "Mahomet Ali." I accordingly went round, and finding we could not easily otherwise remove the stakes, I lashed the

gun-boat to them at dead low water, and as the tide rose she lifted them out as easily as feathers, and on the ebb-tide we sent them floating to sea. Again did the enemy watch for an opportunity, and again did I uproot their stockade; the expenditure of labour being but slight on our side, whilst with them the skill, energy, and labour necessary to construct such a work, although merely formed of the stems of young trees from the neighbouring jungle, were very remarkable.

Several messages of a very uncivil nature came to our commanding officer, to which equally uncourteous answers were returned.

One day the other gun-boat, the "Diamond," and the cutter had been obliged to weigh and proceed to sea in chase of prahus, leaving my vessel alone in the river. About noon two long row-boats, called sampans, with ten or twelve persons in each, swept suddenly round the point ahead, and made direct for us. Jadee saw them immediately, and his eyes glistened at the prospect of their intentions being warlike. Whatever their original purpose was, they were peaceable enough when they saw us all under arms; Jadee, however, as a precautionary measure, putting on his fighting jacket, a long sleeveless one of red cloth, sufficiently quilted to turn the edge of

a "badi."* The leading canoe was hailed at pistol-shot distance, and called upon to state her mission. We were informed that they came with a communication from Datoo Mahomet Ali, the bearer being no less a personage than his second in command, a man called "Haggi Loūng."

The canoe in which the Haggi was seated, was permitted to come alongside, and she had evidently a picked crew, armed to the teeth; and I had no doubt that my serang was right in saying that, had they found the gun-boat with half a crew on shore, as was usually the case about noon, the reverend Haggi and his comrades were to have essayed her capture. However, I received the gentleman with all the dignity a youth could muster, although I was somewhat piqued at the supercilious smile which played on the face of Haggi Loūng as he eyed the pocket edition of the white man before him.

Loūng was rather tall, with square shoulders and bony limbs, evincing undoubted capability for enforcing those maxims of the Koran which his high forehead and intellectual countenance showed he possessed mental capacity for acquiring and inculcating.

* A "badi" is a small stabbing-knife, used in a close fight, or to administer a *coup de grâce* to an enemy.

Seating ourselves in a circle, consisting of Haggi Loūng and his secretary, with Jadee on one side of me and the interpreter on the other, we proceeded to business. The message — if ever one was sent, which I strongly question — when divested of Eastern ornament and circumlocution, amounted merely to an attempt to persuade me to believe that the blockade of the southern branch of the river was totally needless, and that the best proof that it was so, consisted in the fact of their having stockaded it across themselves; and they begged I would not touch that stockade.

I told him, "He had already received an answer from my superior officer upon these points; I had nothing to add; and that Mahomet Ali must remember that, as English officers merely acted from a sense of duty, and in obedience to orders, I hoped the next time he asked me a favour it would be one that I could grant."

The Haggi wanted to discuss the point; but as the arguments passed for the most part through the medium of Jadee and the interpreter, I suppose they lost their point, for I kept my ground.

Failing in this respect, he gradually turned the conversation to the prospect of the Siamese regaining the province of Quedah, and with much finesse led

me into the error of believing that the Siamese army had been repulsed at all points. I now sent for boiled rice and fish, which I ordered to be set before the Haggi; and Jadee proceeded, by my desire, to see that the Malays in the canoes had food supplied to them, though, from the expression of his face whilst so employed, I could plainly observe that he would have far preferred blowing them from the muzzle of the bow gun. Watching his opportunity, Jadee made a quiet sign that he wished to speak to me, and when I went to him, hurriedly said, "Now, sir, now is our opportunity; capture this man; send his canoes away to say so, and tell Mahomet Ali we are alone this afternoon, and that Numero Tega will fight him at once!" I pointed out to Jadee that the challenge might be very well, but that the capture of Loūng was out of the question, as he had come to us in the sacred character of a messenger. Jadee could not understand it at all, and walked away muttering something in which I heard, "Mahomet Ali—pigs —and poltroons" generally mixed up.

Haggi Loūng was all smiles and civility, little thinking how hostile a proposition had just been made against him, and shortly afterwards rose to depart; an event I rather hastened, as it was impossible, with such inflammable materials as his crews and mine

were composed of, to tell the moment a disturbance might take place. Jadee was rustling about like a game-cock ready for a row; and I saw him, and a wild-looking Malay who steered one of the canoes, exchanging glances and curls of the lip which betokened anything but amity. Desiring Jadee to do something at the other side of the gun-boat, I wished Haggi Loŭng "Good-bye," and had just lost sight of them round the point when my serang came aft, all smiles and sunshine: to my queries he only smiled mysteriously, and replied I should soon know; and as this evidently referred to something connected with our late visitors, I began to have my fears lest a pleasant *divertissement*, in the shape of a creese fight, had been arranged between him and the Orson from Parlis.

Directly it fell dark, our consorts rejoined us; and whilst all the vessels were lashed together, prior to taking up their night positions, one of the look-out men maintained that a long canoe had crossed the river above us, his quick eye having sighted her as she darted over the bright streak of light which gleamed between the gloomy shadows of either side. From one of our prizes we had captured a long fairy-like canoe, scooped out of the trunk of a tree: with six paddles she would fly through the water. Barclay

and I jumped into her at once, and, with a mixed crew of Malays and Englishmen, gave chase to the stranger. It was top of high water, or nearly so; the tide as usual had overflowed all the neighbouring land (except the high patch of ground on which stood the little village previously referred to), and the dark stems of the mangrove and other trees, which seemed to flourish in an amphibious life, stretched away on either hand from the river in a black and endless labyrinth.

A few deep and silent strokes brought us up almost noiselessly to the spot where the stranger had been seen to cross, although we were in the shadow on the opposite side of the river; the paddles were laid across our boat, and the steersman alone kept her going gently up the stream. We were all eyes; now looking in among the dark waters, out of which rose the black and solemn trunks of the trees; now eagerly gazing across to the opposite side of the river. Almost instinctively, we all pointed, without speaking a word, to a canoe twice as long as our own, which had evidently seen us, and was apparently waiting to see whether we were in search of her, or for us to show our intentions. We did not keep them long in suspense.

"Give way," exclaimed Barclay, "and get above them!" In a moment our paddles struck the water, and our craft seemed to lift and jump at every stroke. The other canoe was not idle; for a few minutes it was doubtful which would win, and we could hear the men cheering one another on to exertion. "A scout! a scout!" exclaimed our Malays; "the prahus will be down when the ebb-tide makes!" I told Barclay this. "I hope to God they will!" he exclaimed; "we shall be ready for them!" We now began to head the canoe: as soon as we saw we could do that, Barclay got his musket ready, and gave orders, directly he fired, for the helmsman to steer diagonally across the stream, so as to get on the same side as the craft we were in chase of.

Taking a deliberate aim at the scout canoe he fired, and we with a shout struck across for her, hoping either to lay her alongside or drive her back upon the gun-boats; but we had counted without our host, and the Malays of our party gave a yell of disgust as the enemy disappeared as it were into the jungle. We were soon on her heels, and guided by the sound she made in forcing through the mangrove swamp, held our course: now aground upon the straddling legs of a mangrove tree; then pushing

through a thicket, out of which the affrighted birds flew shrieking; then listening to try and distinguish the sound of the flying canoe from all the shrill whistles, chirrups, and drumming noises, which render an Indian jungle far more lively by night than by day. Once or twice we thought we were fast catching her, when suddenly our canoe passed from the mangrove swamp into an open forest of trees, which rose in all their solemn majesty from the dark waters. We saw our chance of success was now hopeless, for the scout canoe had fifty avenues by which to baffle us, and *terra firma* was, we knew, not far distant. It was a strange and beautiful scene. The water was as smooth as burnished steel, and reflected, wherever the trees left an opening, the thousand stars which strewed the sky: the tall stems of the forest trees rose from this glittering surface, and waved their sable plumes over our heads; whilst the fire-fly, or some equally luminous insect, occasionally lit up first one tree and then another, as if sparks of liquid gold were being emitted from the rustling leaves.

Silently we lay on our oars, or rather paddles; not a sound of the flying canoe could be heard: it was evident that the scout had escaped, and it only remained for us to make the best of

our way back again — a task which, in the absence of all excitement, we found an extremely tough one; indeed, we grounded so often on the roots of the mangrove trees, that I proposed to wade through the mud and water, dragging the canoe after us. To this, however, the Malays would in nowise listen, and spoke so earnestly of the danger arising from a particular kind of snake, that we thought it better to listen to them — a piece of wisdom upon our part which gave rise to some congratulations on the morrow, when, in company with our advisers, we visited the mangrove swamp, and found in the fork of many of the trees a perfect nest of snakes. These, the Malays assured us, were very venomous, yet the reptiles were not above a foot or eighteen inches long, and about the girth of a man's little finger; the greatest peculiarity being strong black markings about the body, which gave them an appearance somewhat in keeping with their bad reputation. Having, like most youths, read every book which I could get hold of, descriptive of wild beast, bird, and reptile, I, from my reading, had been led to believe that the whip-snake was everywhere most dangerous; and I must say—when I observed a number of these long green-coloured creatures hanging like tendrils from the trees we

had in the darkness of the previous night been pushing our way through — I felt thankful for our escape. Touching one of the Malays who were with me, I pointed at them and said, "They are very bad." He smiled, and assured me they were not by any means so dangerous as those in the forks of the trees in the mangrove swamps.

CHAP. IX.

Mahomet Alee does not attack.—Start Crane-shooting.—Day-break in Malayia.—The Adjutant. — The "old Soldier!"—The "old Soldier" fishing. — The "old Soldier" weathers a young Sailor.— No Cranes.—Plenty of Monkeys.—Monkeys in a Passion.—A sudden Chase of a Prahu.—Birds'-Nests and Pulo Bras Manna. — The edible-nest-building Swallow, *Hirundo esculenta;* Food; Habits. — Decide upon seeing the Nests collected.—Difficulties in the way of doing so. — Jamboo enjoying Company's pay.— Jamboo remonstrates. — A scramble for Birds'-Nests.—The Malays descend the Face of the Cliff. — The Home of the edible-nest-building Swallow. — The Birds'-Nest Trade. — The Nests composed of Gelatin.

THE chase by night was followed by no general attack from the piratical fleet, and we surmised that the scouts, having found us on the "*qui vive*," had reported unfavourably of the probability of surprising the blockading squadron,—a surmise which the inhabitants of the neighbouring village afterwards confirmed.

One middle watch in January, the look-out man awoke me, and told me my sampan and gun were ready as I had desired.

I could hardly conceive it possible to feel so cold and cheerless at the short distance of 200 miles from the equator as I then did. The mist of the early night had fallen in the shape of dew, wetting the decks and awnings as if it had been raining heavily; and a light breeze blowing down from the Patani Hills struck a chill into my bones, already stiffened by sleeping upon a hard and damp deck.

Day had as yet hardly dawned, but I was anxious to try and get a shot at some flocks of elegant white cranes of a small size which nightly roosted on a clump of trees about a mile distant from my anchorage; and my only chance of being able to get sufficiently near, was to be there before they flew off to their feeding-grounds. Half lamenting I had troubled myself with any such sporting mania, yet unwilling to let the Malay see what a lazy individual his captain was, I threw myself into the canoe, grasped the paddle, and by a stroke or two awoke to the interest of the spot before me, and the beauties of a morning in Malaya.

The daydawn had already chased the stars away from one half the bright heaven overhead; the insect world, so noisy from set of sun on the previous day, had ceased their shrill note, whilst the gloomy forest shook off its sombre hue, and, dripping with dew,

glistened in many a varied tint, as the morning beams played upon it, or streamed down through the mountain gorges beyond. The Indian Sea laughed with a thousand rippling smiles, and the distant isles seemed floating on clouds of purple and gold as the night mists rose from their level sea-boards, and encircled the base of their picturesque peaks.

One could have cheered with joy and heartfelt healthful appreciation of the glorious East; but no! not far beyond me, on a projecting shoal, stands the tall adjutant, who had as yet baffled all our attempts to shoot him — a very king of fishing-birds. He formerly used to fish in the Parlis river, but our seamen in the cutter, who would brook no competitors in their poaching pursuits, fired and fired at the poor adjutant without hitting it, until, by way of revenge, they nicknamed it the "old soldier" — a term which in their estimation comprised all that was wary, and difficult to catch at a disadvantage. "The old soldier" loomed like a giant in the grey mist flowing from the forest, and he evidently saw me as soon as I did him; but knowing from experience the distance to which his enemies might be allowed to approach with safety, he strutted out a pace or two into deeper mud or water and pursued his fishing. I, however, did not intend to fire until I reached the

cranes, which I could see clustering in some trees ahead; and the adjutant, as if fathoming my intentions, or, what is more likely, taking me for a Malay (who never disturbed him), let me pass within moderate shot distance.

I was interested in seeing how he captured his prey, and watched him narrowly. The bird stood like a statue, in a foot of water and mud, the long legs admirably supporting the comparatively small body, a long neck, and such a bill! It looked as if it could cut a man in two and swallow him. Presently, from a perfect state of quietude, the adjutant was all animation, the head moving rapidly about as if watching its unconscious prey; a rapid stride or two into a deep gully of water, a dive with the prodigious beak, and then the adjutant held in the air what looked like a moderate-sized conger-eel. Poor fish! it made a noble fight; but what chance had it against an "old soldier" who stood ten feet without stockings, and rejoiced in a bill as big as one's thigh and some four feet long? The last I saw of the poor conger-eel was a lively kick in the air, as "the soldier" lifted his beak and shook his breakfast down.

My resolution to shoot cranes alone was not proof against the temptation. I saw before me, not only

a thumping bird, but—alas! for the frailty of a midshipman's appetite!—a jolly good breakfast in the contents of his maw. A more convincing proof of my not being a thorough-bred sportsman could not be adduced, than my allowing such base feelings to actuate me. I stealthily laid my paddle into the boat, capped my fowling-piece before lifting it from between my feet; but the "old soldier" had his eye upon me, and directly I stopped paddling, commenced to walk away from his old position. By the time I took aim, a long range intervened between us, and, of course, all I did was to ruffle his feathers, and send the "old soldier" off, as usual, at "the double,"—thus losing adjutant and fish, as well as the cranes, which took flight when the echoes of the forest carried the report to them.

My firing had, however, disturbed more than cranes; for a screeching and chattering noise in the jungle on my right made me load again rapidly, and paddle with all my strength for a nullah or water-course, from which these sounds were, I felt certain, coming. On obtaining a view of it, I saw at once what was the matter—a school of black monkeys had been alarmed; and when I turned my canoe so as to go up the narrow creek of water which led into the forest, the fighting monkeys of the little

party seemed determined to frighten me out of it. I never saw anything so comical: the ladies and babies retired, whilst about a dozen large monkeys, perfectly black except their faces — which were grey or white, giving them the appearance of so many old men — sprang along the branches, that reached across over my head. They worked themselves up into a perfect fury, shrieking, leaping, and grinning with rage. Once or twice they swung so close over my head, that I expected they were going to touch me; but, amused beyond measure, I was determined not to fire at the poor creatures. Whether, as in the case of the "old soldier," my resolution was proof against all temptation, I had not time to prove; for the sullen boom of a gun from Parlis river rolled along the forest; and being the signal for an enemy in sight to seaward, I left the monkeys for a future day, and hurried back to my vessel, just reaching her in time to start in chase of a prahu that had been seen running for an island called Pulo Bras Manna. The breeze sprang up fresh and fair, and my little vessel soon rattled over the eight miles of distance which intervened, but not before the prahu had disappeared behind the island. Skirting the rocky shores of Pulo Bras Manna, we discovered the prahu at anchor in a pretty little sandy bay, the only

one in the island. The nicodar, or master of the prahu, hailed to say he was a friend; and, on my getting alongside of him, showed proofs of her being a peaceful trader, employed in collecting the edible birds'-nests constructed by the "*Hirundo esculenta*" of naturalists, with which all these islands abound. I was right glad to have an opportunity of gleaning any information about an article of commerce so novel and strange to all Europeans. The nicodar informed me that all the adjacent islands yielded birds'-nests for the Chinese market in a greater or less degree, the more rocky and precipitous islands yielding the larger quantity. The right of taking them was for the time vested in Tonkoo Mahomet Said of Quedah, on behalf of his sovereign; but he had farmed them out for a year to some Penang merchant, who paid a certain rent, and screwed as much more as he could out of the birds'-nests. The nicodar of the prahu had entered into a speculation by which he promised a certain number of nests to the merchant, provided he might have the surplus — an engagement which he assured me would this year be a very losing one.

My attention had often been previously called to the little birds which construct these curious nests. They might be constantly seen skimming about the

surface of the sea in the neighbourhood of the Malayan Islands. In form and feather they looked like a connecting link between the common swallow and the smallest of the petrel tribe—the Mother Carey's chicken—ever restless, ever in motion. Sometimes they appeared to skim the water as if taking up some substance with the bill from the surface; at other times darting, turning, and twisting in the air, as if after fleet-winged insects. Yet neither in the air nor on the water could the keenest eye amongst us detect anything upon which they really fed. However, the Malays asserted that they fed upon insects and upon minute creatures floating upon the surface of the sea; and that, by some arrangement of the digestive organs, the bird, from its bill, produced the glutinous and clear-looking substance of which its nest was constructed—an opinion in some manner substantiated by the appearance of the nests, which in structure resembled long filaments of very fine vermicelli, coiled one part over the other, without much regularity, and glued together by transverse rows of the same material.

In form, the edible nests resemble the bowl of a large gravy-spoon split in half longitudinally, and are, in all respects, much smaller than the common swallow's nest. The bird fixes the straight edge

against the rocks, generally preferring some dark and shady crevice in a cliff, or a cave formed by the wash of the waves of the sea. I am rather inclined to believe that the swallow which constructs these edible nests is a night bird, and that the day is by no means its usual time for feeding; indeed, I hardly ever remember observing them, except early in the morning, late in the evening, or in the deep shadow afforded by some tall and overhanging cliff, and they appeared to avoid sunlight or the broad glare of day.

Although the nicodar of the prahu was necessarily very civil, he did not willingly assent to my proposal to accompany his men on their excursion to collect nests; but Jadee recommended me to wait quietly until we saw his party starting, and then to proceed and join them, *nolens volens;* though he warned me that curiosity would hardly induce me to undergo, a second time, the risk the nest-gatherers went through for large profits.

In a couple of hours' time we saw a party land from the prahu and join some half-dozen Malays who lived in a hut on the beach. Awakening my interpreter, Jamboo, who being upon Company's pay gave way to sleeping and rice-eating with a degree of perseverance which astonished me, I hastened

away with him, and before his eyes were well open we were scrambling through brake and jungle, at a headlong pace, the Malays having evidently determined to shake us off by hard walking. The consequence was that poor Jamboo, with a howl, went rolling over the rocks, and tried hard to detain me. I saw only one remedy, and started off to catch the nearest party of nest-gatherers, and keep them until my worthy interpreter was able to join. I soon succeeded in showing them that a young sailor's legs were as good as theirs; and having a pistol with me, there was no difficulty in making two Malays sit down until Jamboo, in reply to my repeated hail, came up, muttering at the hardships his duty as a midshipman's interpreter was ever leading him into. Laughingly consoling him by the strong doubts I entertained of his ever again seeing his dear Penang, I added: "Now, then, Jamboo, tell these fellows *we* are going birds'-nesting with them."

"By Gad, sar! you kill me, sar! Me poor man, sar! What my mother do?" remonstrated poor Jamboo.

"Never mind about the old lady," I replied; "do what I tell you, and come along.—Why, Jamboo, you, the son of an Englishman, and not ashamed to talk in that strain!" I continued; "fancy if your father

could only see you, and hear that his son was afraid of going birds'-nesting!"

"Ah, sar!" replied Jamboo, "you only make play now. My father very brave man—so my mother say; but I never see him; and my mother never teach me to go down dark holes with a little bit of rope, and swing about in the air, all the same as one bird."

I had at last to promise Jamboo that he should not have to "swing about in the air, all the same as one bird," and thereupon he informed the two Malays they were to go on in the execution of their vocation, but that we would keep with them.

The Malays had on little if any clothing: each man carried a sharp bill hook, with which to cut his way through the underwood, with an iron spike of considerable length; and a torch made of bark and the resins exuded from forest trees. A small bag for containing the nests, and a coil of roughly-made rope strong enough to support their weight, together with a flint and steel, completed the equipment.

We climbed a long though steep ascent which led to some precipitous cliffs on the opposite side of the little island. Our way led through a pretty close jungle, with much underwood overgrowing rocks,

fissures, and boulders, in all directions: a more break-neck walk I had never before undertaken; and as we went straight across country, over and through everything, Jamboo's clothes, as well as mine, were torn into shreds and decorated every thorn, or ragged stump; to add to the excitement, the Malays kept a sharp eye about them in the hollows or where the vegetation was very dank, and muttered the ominous word "Oular!" snake, as a warning to us. However, I felt that it was out of the question to depend upon one's keenness of vision for security against such reptiles, when the creepers and grass were up to my waist, and sought a little consolation in my friend the Haggi's creed of predestination.

At last we reached the edge of the cliff, which stood about 200 feet above the sea, having many deep fissures in its face and several caves at its base. After sitting down to rest for a short time, the Malays went to work. Each man drove his spike very carefully in the ground, secured his rope to it, slung his bag and torch across his back, and, after repeating a Mahometan Pater-noster, lowered himself down the cliff by means of his rope, and proceeded to search the caves and crannies for birds'-nests. Accustomed though I was, as a sailor, to see great activity and much risk run, still it fell far short,

in my estimation, of that undergone by these Malays: in some places they had to vibrate in the air like a pendulum, to gather sufficient momentum to swing in under some overhanging portion of the cliff, the wretched rope by which the man was suspended a hundred feet above the chafing sea and rocks below, cutting against the sharp edge of the cliff, to use a nautical simile, "like a rope-yarn over a nail." Here and there the men picked up a nest or two, but at last one of them who had lowered himself down to within ten or twelve feet of the water, shouted out that he had discovered a cave thickly tenanted with the birds, of which we had ocular demonstration by the numbers that flew out when they heard his voice.

Leaving Jamboo to help me, should I fail in climbing up as the Malays did, I slid down to the newly-discovered cave of nests. The nest-seekers smiled at my curiosity, and pointed into a cave with a narrow entrance, out of which a smell was issuing which partook neither of frankincense nor myrrh, and of an inky darkness which the keenest eye could not penetrate. There was a narrow ledge of rock which led into the cave, and on this we advanced until out of the wind and daylight: the Malay now struck a light and lit his torch, and his doing so was the signal for the most infernal din mortal ears were ever pained

with; the tiny chirp of the swallows being taken up and multiplied a thousandfold by the beautiful echoes of the cave, whilst huge bats flitted round us, and threatened not only to put our light out, but to knock us off the narrow ledge on which we stood, by a rap on the head, into the black cleft below, which seemed to descend to the very foundations of the cliffs. Holding both hands to my ears, I asked the Malay to show me the nests: he waved his torch about, and pointed some of them out in spots overhead, where it appeared as if only a gnome could have gathered them; the poor Malay, however, explained to me that he must go up and cut some saplings and branches to form a ladder by which he could reach those apparently inaccessible nests, though not, I could well see, without considerable risk. Satisfied with what I had seen, I returned to the top of the cliff aided materially by the Malay, who, like a goat, found footing where gulls could only have roosted, and, joining Jamboo, we returned alone through the forest to my little craft.

Then and afterwards I gleaned, from different sources, that the trade in birds'-nests employed a very large amount of capital and men. The loss of life arising from accidents and exposure was extraordinarily large; but the high prices obtained

insured no lack of labour. One person largely engaged in the trade assured me that, on an average, two out of five men employed in birds'-nesting met with a violent death; and, under those circumstances, it is not to be wondered at that a catty (or pound and a quarter English) of the best nests cost generally forty dollars, or about nine pounds sterling!

The value of the nests depends upon their translucent whiteness and freedom from feathers or dirt; the first quality being those which evidently have not been lined, or used, by the unfortunate little swallows. Such nests are nothing but a morsel of pure gelatin; and having often eaten them in their native state, I can vouch for their perfect tastelessness; indeed, upon one occasion, after being twenty-four hours without food, I enjoyed birds'-nests boiled down in cocoa-nut milk.

The Chinese employ them largely, as well as *bêche de mer*, shark-fins, and other gelatinous substances, in thickening their soups and rich ragouts.

CHAP. X.

Return to Parlis.— Datoo Mahomet Alee's sanguinary Threat. — Jadee has, we find, sent an abusive Message. — Jadee reproved. — Jadee's feelings are hurt. — Character of my Native Crew. — A Page about Native Prejudices. — One of the Malays mutinous. — Cure for Native Prejudices. — Malayan Jungle-Scenery by Daylight. — Black Monkeys.— A Monkey Parody upon Human Life. — English Seamen and the Monkeys. — Scarcity of Fresh Water. — The Village of Tamelan. — A Malay Chieftainess. — Watering. — Snakes disagreeably numerous. — Stories of large Snakes.

FROM Pulo Bras Manna and birds'-nests we returned again to Parlis, just saving daylight enough to find our way over the bar and its shallows. On reporting myself to the senior officer, I was not a little astonished to learn that, in consequence of the wanton insult received from me and my gun-boat, Datoo Mahomet Alee had sent down an uncivil message, declaring the "Numero Tegas" *hors de loi*, and had sworn by his beard, that so surely as he caught me, or any of my crew, from the valiant Jadee to the toiling Campar, no mercy would be shown. Quite at a loss to understand the origin of so sanguinary a

threat — for I and Haggi Loūng had parted the best of friends — I guessed that Jadee had been at some nefarious tricks. At first he pretended to suppose that the wrath of the pirate arose from my destruction of his stockades; but this I felt sure was not the sole offence, and at last he acknowledged that the Polyphemus who steered the canoe had jeered at him, and insinuated that it was unbecoming for Malay men to be commanded by a white boy, alluding to myself. To which Jadee had replied by stating, it was his opinion that the mother of not only the one-eyed gentleman, but those of the gentry up the river in general, were no better than they should be, — that their fathers were dogs, and their chiefs pigs! and the sooner they all came down to try the strength of the Company's powder, the better pleased he should be. I saw at once what had excited Datoo Mahomet Alee's ire, and that he no doubt identified me with Jadee. All my efforts to point out to my worthy coxswain the impropriety of his conduct failed: he was satisfied with having brought about a state of feeling which added materially to the excitement of himself and crew; and although, whilst I was speaking to him, he seemed as repentant as possible, I saw in a minute afterwards he had forgotten my admonition, and would be a Malay

in spite of me. With any other than an Asiatic, such abuse and challenges would have partaken of the character of mere bravado; but it was not so in Jadee's case; and I had to be careful not to let him think I fancied it was so: for on one occasion, when he asked me what the Rajah Laut (Captain Warren) would think of it, I said I feared he would be very angry, and would rather doubt his courage than otherwise. Jadee, I saw, was sadly hurt at this, sulked for a day or two, and when I quietly got him into conversation, he said if Captain Warren should really express such an opinion, he had but one course, and that at any rate would prove he did not fear Mahomet Alee and all his crew put together. I knew what he meant—to run a muck amongst the pirates, a desperate resource of every Malay when he fancies himself irredeemably injured in character, or when rendered reckless by misery. Armed with his creese, one man will, in such a mood, throw himself upon any number of foes or friends, and stab right and left until himself shot down or creesed as a mad dog would be.

With a little kindness, and a gentle introduction to my small store of grog, of which Jadee had not a Mahometan horror, I gradually brought him round to a better frame of mind; indeed, by the end of the second month, I perfectly understood the cha-

racter and disposition of all my crew. Secure in the feeling of awe for a white master which the native of India and Malayia cannot shake off, I was enabled to treat them far more familiarly than I could have done English seamen, without subverting the discipline of a man-of-war. I found them all obedient to a degree, so far as I was personally concerned; but there were sometimes irregularities arising from Jadee's imperious treatment of them, or from the feeling of utter contempt in which they (the seamen) held my interpreter, the worthy Jamboo—a feeling arising purely, I fancy, from his being an unfortunate half-caste, a man of no nation nor blood.

Whenever these cases did occur, I punished the Malays exactly as we were in the habit of doing Englishmen; and although they sometimes stared at the novelty, the system answered admirably, notwithstanding that the native gentleman in the "Diamond" gun-boat assured me it must end in mutiny and danger to my person. Like all Asiatics, the Malay, if he finds you will listen to what are termed national prejudices, will produce an endless store of them, to avoid doing anything but what happens to please him. He sees a Sepoy soldier encouraged in all sorts of prejudices; he sees a fellow who would quiver under your very look, were you alone with

him in an open field, allowed to be grossly abusive and insolent to an English officer, if the latter should by accident touch his water-jar, or cross the magic circle drawn round his cooking-place, under the plea that his Brahmin or Mahometan prejudices, forsooth, have been infringed upon; and the Malay, very naturally, would like to have some recognised prejudices likewise.

The one they wished to establish in our little squadron was the right of treating the wretched half-caste interpreter with contumely. I determined to dispute the prejudice; and although the affair occurred later in the blockade than the period I am now referring to, still I shall relate it now, as illustrative of one of the many misapprehensions people labour under with respect to Malays. A prahu had escaped me one night, owing to the want of vigilance in the look-out men, and I, in consequence, made arrangements for Jadee, the interpreter, and myself, to take the watch in turn, besides stationing a look-out man as usual. One night, after Jamboo had relieved me at twelve o'clock, I lay upon deck, but could not sleep, fancying I heard some unusual noises in our neighbourhood. Jamboo went forward in a quarter of an hour's time, and found the look-out man sound asleep. On rousing him, the fellow

—a young, smart, but excessively saucy Malay—instead of thanking him, called him an abusive name. I desired Jamboo to give him an extra hour as sentry. Shortly afterwards, the Malay was again off his post, and again abusive. I got up, and spoke to him, assured him of a severe punishment if he persisted in such conduct and language; but it was of no avail, and, about two o'clock, a *fracas* took place, in which I heard the Malay apply the foulest epithet in his language to the interpreter; and he persisted in repeating it when I ordered him to be silent; in short, he became so violent and threatening, I had to iron and lash him down.

I saw that there would be an end to my authority, if the fellow was not punished by a severe flogging; and I sought Mr. B——'s authority for carrying it into execution. He advised me to see the native officer, who commanded the senior gun-boat, in the first place, but fully sanctioned a severe punishment. Mr. S—— was very averse to any such thing, and wanted to stop the prisoner's rice or his pay. I was obstinate, however, and carried my point, although he warned me of all sorts of fatal consequences likely to ensue.

Next day, with all due formalities, I carried the law into execution, lashing the culprit to the bow

gun. He could hardly believe his senses; and when the first lash was laid on, shouted for a rescue, and appealed to his countrymen not to look on and see him beaten like a dog: he altered his tone, nevertheless, when he found no rescue likely to come, and vowed never to disobey me again — a promise he afterwards faithfully kept; and from that time I had no more trouble in "No. 3." with that national prejudice, at any rate, and slept just as soundly, and placed just as much faith in my swarthy crew, as ever I had done, without having any cause to rue it, the culprit eventually becoming one of my right-hand men.

I had not forgotten the fact that monkeys abounded in our neighbourhood; and although both my brother-midshipman and myself perpetrated all sorts of atrocities at first in shooting the poor creatures, we soon desisted, and satisfied ourselves with wasting powder and shot on less interesting creatures. Monkey Creek, as we termed the place which they most frequented, was our usual afternoon lounge; and after our light and necessarily wholesome dinner (consisting of Her Majesty's rations adorned with a little rice, and occasionally a plate of fish), Barclay and I did not, of course, feel a siesta by any means necessary, but jumping into the sampan, we

would paddle gently up Monkey Creek, to enjoy the cool shade of the forest and amuse ourselves. Passing clear of the belt of mangrove, we soon floated amongst the luxuriant vegetation of an Indian jungle; the underwood here and there giving place to small patches of grass or weed. Large alligators which had been ashore on either bank launched themselves slowly into the creek, or turned round and kept a steady watch with their cruel-looking yellow eyes. Bright-coloured iguanas and strange-shaped lizards shuffled along the banks, or lay on the branches of trees, puffing themselves up so as to look like nothing earthly; the shrill call of the pea-hen and the eternal chattering of monkeys gave life and animation to a scene which did not lack interest or beauty. Pushing our canoe in amongst the overhanging wild vines and creepers so as to hide her, we sat quietly smoking our cigars to await the curiosity of the monkeys: it was not long before they commenced their gambols or attempts to frighten us. A string of black ones, whose glossy coats would have vied in beauty with that of a black bear, came breaking through the trees with frantic cries, and threw themselves across the creek, and back again, with amazing energy; then a hoarse sound made us turn suddenly, with a flashing suspicion of Malay

treachery, to meet the gaze of a face almost human, with a long grey beard, which was earnestly watching us through the foliage of a withered tree; bring a gun to the shoulder, and the old man's head would be seen to leap away upon the disproportionate body of some ape. But nothing could equal in ludicrous interest a family monkey-scene taking place in some clear spot at the base of a tree. There a respectable papa might be seen seated against the roots, stretching out his legs, enjoying the luxury of a scratch, and overlooking with patriarchal pride, and no small degree of watchfulness, the gambols of his son or daughter; while with fond solicitude his better half, a graceful female monkey, was employed turning aside the tufts of grass, as if seeking nuts or berries for the little one; then she would clutch the little rascal, and roll over with him, in all the joyousness of a young mother, and he, the tiny scamp, shrieked, pouted, and caressed her, like any master Johnny or dear Billy would have done. The whole scene was a burlesque upon human nature: unable to contain ourselves any longer, we burst into roars of laughter. The father leapt at once on a neighbouring branch, and shaking it with rage, whoo-whoo'd! at us through a very spiteful set of teeth; the lady screamed, the baby squeal[illegible]

and jumped to her breast, clasped its little arms round her neck, and its legs round her chest, and then with a bound she was off and away with her "tootsy pootsy;" papa following, and covering her retreat with venomous grins at us, whom he evidently considered only a superior breed of apes.

Such scenes we often witnessed; and, to the Englishmen in the cutter, the monkeys afforded an endless source of mirth; and the quaint comparisons they drew between some of these sylvans in the forests of Quedah, and sundry Daddies Brown, or Mothers Jones, at Portsmouth or Plymouth, though extremely laughable and witty, would, I fancy, have been thought far from flattering, had they been heard by the old people in question.

The main difficulty experienced in maintaining a close blockade of a coast such as Quedah, arose from the want of fresh water with which to supply the daily wants of our men. On Crab Island, all the wells we dug yielded only salt water; the river was always brackish; and as the dry season advanced, the wells upon the islands to which we usually resorted began to fail us. We were despatched in quest of water, and, at the suggestion of one of the men, who knew this neighbourhood, proceeded to a place called Tamelan.

This village was about twenty miles distant, and situated on a small river called the "Setouè," which discharges itself into a very picturesque but shallow bay.

After some difficulty, we discovered the "Setouè," and proceeded up it a few miles, and alarmed the inhabitants of Tamelan not a little by our sudden arrival. The village was prettily situated on a high bank, and consisted of about a hundred neatly-built mat houses, scattered through a grove of cocoa-nut trees, which extended for a mile in a line along the Setouè river; either end of the cocoa-nut grove rested on a dense jungle, which swept, with a large semicircular curve, behind the village, leaving ample clearance for the rice-fields and wells of the inhabitants. Tamelan, strangely enough for a country where women are not held in high repute, was under the rule of a petty chieftainess, called "Nicodar Devi;" her title of Nicodar arising from her possessing the prahus which had carried these Malay settlers to the reconquered village.

We of course gave her brevet rank, and christened her Queen Devi; and a perfect little queen she was. A messenger immediately waited upon me, offering all she had, and trusting we would not molest her people. I immediately visited the Malay queen, and

soon set her mind at rest by stating that we merely wanted water. She sent men to deepen the wells ready for the morrow, and, in short, did all that was possible to assist me. Nothing could exceed the respect and deference paid to this lady by her clan; and we soon learnt to appreciate the kind and hospitable chieftainess — the first Indian woman I had as yet seen treated otherwise than as a drudge or a toy.

She was not more than five-and-thirty, and still very good looking; her manner was extremely lady-like and authoritative, and I took good care she should be treated with the utmost respect by all my people. The inhabitants of Tamelan and Numero Tega soon became great friends, and they willingly sold us all they could spare of fruit or fowl.

While my crew filled the water-casks and embarked them, I generally employed myself butchering doves, wild pigeons, and orange-coloured orioles, which fed in large numbers in the open grounds or amongst the houses.

There was only one serious drawback to sporting such as mine, and that consisted in the great number of snakes which were to be found in the cleared grounds, especially in the neighbourhood of the many holes dug as wells by the Malays. I fancy the great heats an

long droughts had caused these reptiles to congregate where water was only to be found. The Malays killed them in numbers; I counted on one occasion no less than eight of these reptiles lying together, all crushed in the head, and although not large in girth, they varied in length from five to seven feet.

The natives of Tamelan declared most of them to be of the boa-constrictor species, not dangerous in their bite, but, when large, capable of killing a man or a strong deer by enveloping him in their folds: they said it was their poultry which principally suffered, but spoke of monsters in the deep forests, which might, if they came out, clear off the whole village—a pleasant feat for which Jadee, with a wag of his sagacious head, assured me that an "Oular Bessār," or big snake, was quite competent.

It was strange but interesting to find amongst all Malays a strong belief in the extraordinary size to which the boa-constrictors or Pythons would grow: they all maintained, that in the secluded forests of Sumatra or Borneo, as well as on some of the smaller islands which were not inhabited, these snakes were occasionally found of forty or fifty feet in length; and the vice of incredulity not being so strong in me then as it is now, I gave full credence to their

tales, and consoled myself by remembering, when my faith was taxed by some tougher tale than usual, that my respected schoolmaster in the village of Chudleigh had birched into me the fact, attested by even a Pliny, that a snake 120 feet long had disputed the passage of a Roman army on the banks of the Bagrada, and killed numbers of legionaries before its skin could be secured to adorn the Capitol.

CHAP. XI.

Jadee declines to clean the Copper. — A Malay Prejudice. — A Malay Mutiny. — The lost Sheep return. — The Difficulty surmounted. — Malayan mechanical Skill. — An Impromptu Dock. — An Accident, and quick Repairs. — Launch, and resume Station. — Loss of my Canoe. — A Sampan constructed. — The Malayan Axe or Adze. — Ingenious mode of applying native Materials in Construction of Boats.

I HAD but one *fracas* in my gun-boat with my Malays, which, considering how young and inexperienced I was as a commander, was less than might have been expected; but as it assumed a rather serious character at one time, and showed the disposition of my men, it may be worth relating.

I had repeatedly pointed out to the coxswain, Jadee, that it was highly necessary, with a view to preserving the speed of the "Emerald," that the copper with which her bottom was covered should be kept as clean as possible, and where it was visible that it should shine like that of the "Hyacinth"—a vessel I naturally looked upon as my model in every nautical respect.

Jadee, however, shirked the question, and the copper did not improve. I then ordered him to clean it on the morrow, employing the whole crew for the purpose. He began a long rigmarole story about Malaymen not liking to clean copper.

I cut him short by saying white men did not much like doing it, either; but it was our principle to clean every part of a vessel, and that at 9 o'clock in the forenoon on the morrow I expected to see that the work had been done. I dined with Barclay on board the cutter, and paddled myself back in the evening in my canoe, and although Jadee received me respectfully, I saw he was sulky: like more civilised first-lieutenants, he wanted to have his own way; but I took no notice of that until next morning, when at the proper time I looked over the side and found the copper still very dirty. I need scarcely say I was very angry.

Jadee caught a thorough good wigging, and said something about being afraid of ordering the men to do it. I immediately desired him to pipe "Hands clean copper!" He did so. "Every man in a bowling knot and over the side!" I next directed; and then, seeing that they knew what I wanted done, and were at work, I said, in all the Malay I could muster, that the copper was to be cleaned

daily, and pointed out the necessity of a clean bottom to catch fast prahus—a truism I could see they were perfectly aware of. All hands were soon splashing about cleaning the copper, and I fancied my difficulties at an end; addressing Jadee, I told him that I had had to do at 9 o'clock what he should have commenced at 5 o'clock; but that when the copper was clean, he could call his people out of the water, and meantime I was going to shoot in my canoe. He bowed silently, as if accepting my reproof, and I left the "Emerald." Firing at alligators and kingfishers, cranes, fishhawks, and wild pigeons, I did not return for three or four hours. As I was paddling past the cutter, my friend Barclay hailed me, to say I had better go and see what had happened, as Mr. Jadee and all the crew had just passed him, swimming and wading towards the senior gun-boat, the "Diamond," but he could not understand what they said. On reaching the "Emerald," I found no one on board of her but the cook and Jamboo. The latter was in a great fright, and vowed he did not know what would next happen, as all the crew had struck work *after* cleaning the copper, and, with Jadee at their head, had gone to the half-caste officer on board the "Diamond" to say so. Much amused at the novelty of a man-of-

war's crew swimming away from her, I disguised my anger, and leaving word with Jamboo to say, when they returned, that they should not have gone out of the "Emerald" without my permission, I proceeded to explain to Barclay all that had occurred.

He of course was very indignant at what with Englishmen would have been accounted mutiny. I begged him, however, not to be too severe, and to give Jadee and his men an opportunity of coming round quietly. Leaving me, therefore, on board the cutter, he went to the "Diamond," and there found Mr. S—— in a state of great excitement at what had taken place, and vowing some direful accident would occur to me, if I did not study the native character a little more, instead of carrying out my orders in so strict a manner. Barclay, however, was an excellent clear-headed officer, and he knew I was generally considerate to the men; he therefore desired Mr. S—— to point out to Jadee that he had committed a sad breach of discipline, and that so surely as I reported him or others officially, for deserting their colours in the face of an enemy, he would be put in irons and sent off for Captain Warren to adjudicate upon; and, as an only alternative, the best thing they could do was to hurry

back before I discovered that they were absent upon anything but amusement.

Finding his little scheme fail, Jadee, like a wise man, yielded at once, swam ashore, crossed Pulo Quetam with his men, and went off to the gun-boat, resuming their usual avocations as if nothing had happened.

About a couple of hours afterwards I returned on board, reprimanded him for going to collect shell-fish (a common employment during the day) without my sanction, and then, raising my voice, said, "Clean the copper again to-morrow morning, and give me the name of the first man who hesitates to do it!"

Next morning Jadee reported all ready for quarters at nine o'clock; and, with a roguish twinkle in his eye, asked if I was satisfied with the copper. I found it as bright as a new penny. Through the interpreter, I then quietly told the men that I had heard some of them did not like cleaning the copper. I was sorry for it; and, in order that they might escape from it, I should, the very first opportunity I had, take to Captain Warren all those that objected. The copper soon became so bright that I had to check their polishing ardour; and some days afterwards I intentionally ran upon a sandbank, and was

left high and dry by the ebbing tide, spending the whole of a tide cleaning every part of my gun-boat's bottom; and found the crew work as if there never had been a difficulty upon the subject, Jadee setting the most zealous example. Henceforth the swim of Master Jadee became a joke; and when I saw him looking sulky, I used generally to put all smooth again by saying, "Don't go swimming again, Jadee; tell me what your reasons are for not liking what I have said, and I will give you a white man's reasons for desiring it should be done."

The general skill of the Malays as handicraftsmen often struck me; and they were in nowise inferior to our English seamen in that invaluable quality of finding expedients in a time of need where none appeared to exist—a quality known among sailors under the general term *nous*. No difficulty ever arose, in the shape of carpentering, sail-making, or seamanship, that I did not find among my thirty men some one capable of meeting it, although none of them were professed artificers.

My gun-boat's rudder had become slightly injured at the lower part, in crossing the bar during a squally dark night, and I determined to construct a tidal dock on the mud-bank which ran out from Pulo Quetam, and there remedy the defect.

Directly I explained to Jadee what I wanted, he and a quarter-master said it could easily be done, and offered to construct it in such a way that, with a little trouble, we could launch into the river off the bank at any time of tide. I willingly assented, and next day all hands went to work. A spot was chosen at low water, and an excavation made, until good firm clay was reached; the shovels and pickaxes being for the most part impromptu ones, made by the Malays out of the hard wood of the neighbouring jungle. Small trees were then cut in lengths the width of the dock, all the branches neatly lopped off, and the trunks were laid across, to form sleepers, secured firmly in their places by wooden pegs, driven down through them at either end into the clay; these sleepers were carried down in a line reaching well into the water when the tide was at its lowest; and then two stringers of squared-out timber were laid down longitudinally on the aforesaid sleepers, so as to take the gun-boat's bilge, should she incline on one side or the other; and they likewise extended from the dock down to dead low-water mark.

The object of these stringers was to form a way upon which the gun-boat might be launched at any time into the river without waiting for the tide to rise and float her. In six tides everything was as

neatly and cleverly finished as if I had had a body of English shipwrights. At high water we placed the "Emerald" over our dock, which was carefully marked out with poles; and as the water fell, although it was night time, the vessel was admirably squared and shored up: the whole strength of a British dockyard could have done no better.

At low water we repaired the rudder; and, as every movable article had been shifted out of the gun-boat, to make her as light as possible, we adjourned under the trees of Pulo Quetam, to eat our breakfast, and listen to the various tales of my men, of how the natives of the different parts of the archipelago dock their prahus or secrete them in their low and tide-flooded jungles.

Suddenly the "Hyacinth" hove in sight from Parlis, with the signal up, "I wish to communicate;" and Mr. Barclay sent me word that if I could get afloat at once I was to do so, as he was going off to the ship. I had my doubts; for the "Emerald" was built very solidly, and of heavy teak; but Jadee smiled at my doubts, and although he acknowledged he had never played the prank before, still he felt confident of being able to launch her now.

The plan was to ease her bilge down upon the

longitudinal sleeper on one side, knock away the stern shores, and then, aided by the natural inclination of the bank, let her slip down to the water, so as to float with the first of the flood-tide instead of at high water. We secured the masts carefully, lashed the stoutest tackles and hawsers half-way up them for easing the vessel down, drove two stout Sampson-posts into the mud to secure the easing-down tackles, and when all was done, the shores on one side were cut away, and the strain allowed to come on the posts and tackles; unhappily, one of the latter got foul, jerked, and carried away, and in a moment my poor craft fell on her side with a heavy surge, and, as ill-luck would have it, a piece of one of the shores, left accidentally, stove a plank very badly between two of the floor-timbers.

There was no time to be lost; the tide would soon make, and if my gun-boat filled, I knew I should, in midshipman's phraseology, "catch it." My men set at once to work. Jadee and two good hands started off to cut wood to repair the damage, whilst I superintended the wedging-up of the gun-boat, so as to take the strain off the injured part, and disengage the piece of wood on which the vessel was impaled. By the time we were ready, Jadee returned with a piece

of green but hard wood, cut out of a felled tree, and this formed an admirable patch. In a short time, the "Emerald" was as sound as ever; and two hours after the accident had happened, we resumed our station off Parlis.

Another example of their skilful handling of the raw materials the jungle afforded, was in the construction of a sampan, or native boat. I had lost my little canoe; but on one of the islands called Pulo Pangang, or Long Island, good fortune threw in our way two long planks, of a wood named *p. on*, about two inches thick, and maybe each was thirty feet long. Jadee exclaimed immediately, "Ah! Sutoo (the quarter-master) will build you a sampan now, Touhan." I gave him full permission to do so, wondering withal how it was to be done, for we had not, I knew, a handful of nails in the gun-boat, and our stock of carpenter's tools consisted of two native axes and an old hammer, which latter article, named a toukel-besee, was, by the bye, always in Jadee's hands, for he delighted in noise; and, when not better employed, his pleasure consisted in hammering home, for the hundred and fortieth time, all the unfortunate nails in my argosy.

Next day, the quarter-master (Sutoo) and his two assistants landed on Pulo Quetam, with the said tools

and the quantity of plank I have mentioned: three weeks afterwards, a nice little boat, about twenty-two feet long, capable of containing ten persons, and pulling four ours, was launched! The only expense or trouble I was put to consisted in the purchase of a rupee's worth of *damar*, a resinous substance applied generally in Malayia to the same purposes for which we use pitch and tar.

The little Malay axe, in the hands of these ingenious fellows, had done all the work, and, as a tool, it is unique. The handle is about two and a half feet long, light and tough, and capable of being used in one hand; moreover, it has a curve in it like the handle of an English adze. Over the tool end of this handle, a neat rattan grafting is worked in such a manner that the haft of the tool may be held firmly in its place. This tool is in form very like a broad ripping-chisel, except that the blade is not more than three and a half inches long. The workman uses it as an axe or an adze, as he may wish, by simply turning the blade one way or the other in the groove of the handle; and, when necessary, he can take it out of the long handle, fit it temporarily into any rough piece of wood, and make a chisel.

No tree is too big, no wood too hard, for this little tool in the hands of these dexterous fellows: with it

my men had cut out a keel, stern, and stern-post for my sampan, dove-tailed them together, and secured them with strong pegs. The planks were then bevelled and countersunk into the keel, secured there with more wooden pegs, which seemed to do as well as nails in their hands; and, by means of dowell-pins, the two planks were brought carver fashion on each side, one edge on top of the other, the interstices filled up with damar and a felt-like substance collected from palm trees.

The boat was still too low on each side to float, and as cutting a plank of two inches thick out of a tree with an adze would have been a tedious job, I was curious to see how that difficulty was to be surmounted. They did not keep me long in suspense. Long bamboo dowell-pins were let into the edge of the upper plank by means of a red-hot ramrod which was used as an auger. The stems (or, botanically speaking, the midribs) of the leaves of a dwarf palm were next collected, and driven down longitudinally one on top of another on these dowell-pins, until the gunwale had been raised to the necessary height, and then a neat rattan work secured all down to the slight timbers. The thwarts were soon put in, dependent solely upon the timbers and a light sort of stringer of bamboo, which ran round the interior

of the sampan, and served to bind all firmly in a longitudinal direction. A primitive species of tholepin was next secured, and then the paddles cut out; and thus the "Emerald junior" was built. On an emergency, such a simply constructed craft might have carried a crew from Quedah to Singapore; and, at any rate, I hardly think we can say of a people capable of exhibiting such skill in the adaptation of the crude materials at hand to nautical purposes, that they are an unintelligent race or deficient in mechanical ingenuity; and that we should allow them a higher place amongst Eastern nations than the earlier writers seem inclined to yield to them. The Portuguese historian, De Barros, for example, sums them up as "a vile people, whose dwelling was more on the sea than the land." If this be a crime in the Malay, I may say there are other nations of the present day most certainly to be included in the same category.

CHAP. XII.

Return to Quedah.—Native Defences.—The "Teda bagoose." — Scaring an Ally. — Difficulties which accounted for the Delay of the Siamese.—Inchi Laa acknowledges the Effects of our Blockade.—Severity towards the Malays. — A Prahu full of Fugitives captured. — Intelligence suddenly gained of Siamese Army. — Deserters. — The Malay Forces outmanœuvred. — Serious Losses of the Malays. — Inchi Laa. Shameful Atrocities of the Malays. — Exchange of Courtesies. — Permission given for the Women to escape. — Preparations for Flight.

About February the 20th, I returned to my old station off Quedah, the two blockading divisions of boats changing their posts. The only perceptible alteration was the completion of a fascine battery we had remarked the Siamese prisoners to be at work upon in December, and that a few more guns had been placed in defensive positions around the old fort. A gingal battery, constructed for overlooking the approaches of an enemy, was an interesting specimen of Malayan woodcraft and ingenuity. When clearing away the jungle to construct the fascine battery, we observed that they spared four or five lofty trees

which were growing near together; these trees now served as supports to a platform of bamboos, which was hoisted up and lashed as high as possible in a level position; all superfluous branches were lopped off, and the whole well frapped* together with cords, so that the cutting away of one tree alone would not endanger the structure. A cross-piece, or breastwork, was built upon the platform, overlooking the landward side, and then a long and ugly swivel-gun was mounted, such as we, in the days of good Queen Bess, should have styled a demi-culverin; and the whole was lightly thatched over to shelter the wardours, a light ladder of twisted withies enabling them to communicate with the battery below. A more formidable obstacle in the way of scouting parties and skirmishers, or to prevent a sudden assault, could not, in a closely wooded country, have been extemporised.

Our rigid blockade had evidently pressed sadly upon the Quedah folks: they looked big, but were low-spirited; the fishermen had ceased to visit their weirs; few canoes were to be seen pulling about off the town, and when we inquired where they had all

* "Frapping" is a term used when two spars, or stout ropes, are bound together by a cord which drags them out of their natural position or right lines.

gone, we were informed that the fighting men had marched to ravage the Siamese territory. As yet no signs of our allies, and in a few weeks' time the dry season would be drawing to a close. To be sure, a queer-looking brig had joined us, under Siamese colours, and commanded by two captains! the fighting captain a Siamese, the sailing one a Penang half-caste; but the care they took to keep out of gunshot of Quedah fort argued but little for the pluck or enterprise of our allies. We gun-boats, unknown to Captain Warren, used often to run alongside the brig, which rejoiced in at least a dozen guns of different size and calibre, and try hard to get the skippers to move sufficiently close in to draw the Malay fire; but it was no use: the worthy fighting captain would only shake his head, and say, "Teda bagoose! teda bagoose!" or, No good! no good! We therefore named the brig the "Teda Bagoose," a *sobriquet* which, to say the least of it, was not complimentary to His Majesty of Siam.

The skipper, however, was a man of a forgiving disposition, and evidently held me in great respect, after I presented him with a gold cap-band in token of our alliance; and he often came to listen to Jadee's glowing death's-head and marrow-bone stories of what a thorough-bred Malay pirate would do with

the brig and her crew, if it should be her good fortune to fall into the hands of such gentry. Jadee was sore that the Siamese should appear in the character of conquerors over his countrymen, and evidently took a malicious delight in frightening them, when he found we could not hope to draw them into a scrape — an amiable amusement in which I believe he perfectly succeeded. The brig, however, moved off to about half-way to where the "Hyacinth" usually anchored, and remained there until, one day, in a fit of heroism, they attacked and captured a messenger, called Inchi Laa, who used to pass, under a flag of truce, from the Malayan authorities to Captain Warren; and as they got a severe snubbing for doing so, and Jadee playfully informed them that our Rajah Laut was not unlikely, if they committed similar breaches of etiquette on the high seas (which, of course, all belonged to the Company), to blow them and their brig out of water, she weighed one fine morning, and was not again seen until the close of the blockade.

"Hope deferred maketh the heart sick;" and when March came in without any appearance of the army of 30,000 Siamese that were on the 1st of December to have marched from Siam against Quedah province, we began to hold our dark-skinned allies uncommonly

cheap as belligerents, whatever they might be in other respects. Looking, however, at a map of the Malayan peninsula, and taking into consideration the wild and, in many places, pathless jungle which covers it, it did appear to be an undertaking of some magnitude for any Asiatic army, unsupported with all the European appurtenances of war, to march from Bankok to Quedah, crossing numbers of deep and rapid, though short, streams which flow from the central mountains to the sea on either side, and by which the active and amphibious Malays could always threaten their flanks or throw themselves on their line of communication. To check this manœuvre, however, was our purpose in blockading the piratical squadrons, and, as the result proved, we were perfectly successful. On March 4th, the Secretary to Tonkoo Mahomet Said, a Malay gentleman in every acceptance of the word, named Inchi Laa, whom I have before mentioned, came off from Quedah to communicate with Captain Warren. We all observed an expression of anxiety in the generally calm and handsome face of the Inchi; and as he was detained some time on board the blockading boats, we had an opportunity of asking him a few questions. He owned that our rigid blockade of the coast was a sad calamity to the Malays; the more so that it

showed we were determined to support the Siamese in their unjust sovereignty of Quedah. We prevented the Malays, he said, availing themselves of the sea and rivers, for carrying out the tactics of a race who had no equals upon the water except the "Orang-putihs;" and that, apart from stopping reinforcements and supplies of powder and arms, we distressed them sorely from the stoppage of supplies of salt, without which they could not live, and all of which had to be imported.

To our queries about the present position of the Siamese forces Inchi Laa was more reserved, except that he said, with exultation, that the Siamese fled before Tonkoo Mahomet Type-etam, and that the latter—a distinguished Malay warrior, whom we all knew by ill-repute—had, after severe fighting, taken and destroyed the town of Sangorah, on the shores of the opposite sea.

Sangorah we knew to be an important town, the seat of government in the Malayu-Siamese province of Ligor, and the authorities charged with the administration of the tributary Malay states—such as Patani, Calantan, and Quedah—usually resided there. It did not deserve the sounding term of "the great, the beautiful Sangorah!" applied to it by an editor of a local journal, in the Straits of Malacca; but

it was, doubtless, a severe loss to the Siamese, and likely to raise the whole of the tributary states, in the hope of shaking off an allegiance at all times irksome. We naturally were disappointed at the news, in so far as our hopes of a brush with Quedah fort were concerned; but, somehow or other, one could not help feeling admiration for the Malays—a people without a nation or dwelling-place—driven out of the peninsula by the Siamese and Portuguese in days long, long gone by; persecuted and harassed into piracy, by the practice and example of the Spaniard and Dutchman; and then, in our day, hunted down, shot, and hung as felons, unless they would, on the instant, eschew evil practices which had been bred in their very nature by the rapacity and injustice of European nations.

The Inchi, however, left us impressed with the belief that there was a reservation in what he had told us—but what that reservation was, no one could guess until the morrow, when the facts came to us by mere accident. I had gone off with my gunboat to the "Hyacinth," for the purpose of obtaining permission to practise my crew at firing at a target, when, from the ship, a prahu was seen to come out of the jungle some three or four miles south of Quedah. We were sent after it, and, after a long chase,

we caught and brought her to. She was full of women and children, packed as close as they could be stowed, to the fearful number of forty souls, in a craft of about the capacity of an ordinary pinnace. Unable to get any coherent account of who they were, owing to their fright and their evident desire to mislead us, I began to believe Jadee was right in asserting that she was a native slaver, and consequently made a prisoner of her nicodar, proceeding with him and my prize to the "Hyacinth."

Jadee entered into conversation with my prisoner, and after a long harangue, in which I could perfectly understand that he was calling upon the man to speak the truth, and holding out, as an inducement to do so, the possible contingency of being blown away from our bow-gun, or hung at a yard-arm, or, as the mildest of all punishment, working in chains for the term of his natural life. The unfortunate nicodar, aghast at such threats, clasped him round the legs, and implored him to do anything rather than send him back to Quedah. He then briefly explained that all the poor creatures in his boat were fugitives from the province, on their way to Penang, or some other spot under the British flag; that a numerous Siamese army had crossed the frontier, and was destroying every man, woman,

and child; and, pointing to long columns of smoke which we had been under the impression were distant jungle fires, the nicodar assured us they were caused by the ravages of our faithful allies, as well as by the Malay chieftains, to place a desert between the frontier and Quedah fort.

I hastened on board the "Hyacinth" with what I knew would be grateful intelligence to my gallant captain, who was labouring under a severe attack of fever and ague, contracted in long and arduous service on the West Indian station many years previously. The excitement on board the ship was intense, for they had long been heartily tired of lying off a coast at the distance of three or four miles, seeing nothing and hearing little. The mast-heads were soon covered with men, who however could see nothing but a distant column of smoke rising here and there in the calm and hot atmosphere. I was desired to take the prahu close in off the fort, so as to let the garrison and inhabitants know that we had at last ascertained facts, and then to dismiss her on her way to Penang. This was done: the poor creatures went on their road rejoicing, whilst the English musquito squadron cheered heartily on learning the intelligence I had to communicate to them.

There was considerable excitement among the good folks of Quedah, at such an unwonted degree of merriment upon our part; and Inchi Laa soon came off, under some pretext, but evidently to ascertain "what was up."

We soon told him; and he calmly replied, as he left us, that he thought it must be something far more important than the fact of a Siamese army approaching, which would make us so joyful. But we saw, after he landed, that there was a great commotion in the town; and towards dusk a small canoe sneaked out, under the plea of fishing, but eventually ran alongside our boats.

The natives in her said that Mahomet Said had ill-treated them, and that they wished to desert from Quedah, carrying off their women and children; we did not believe their excuse for "ratting," and therefore detained them for the night, and next day sent them off to the ship for a permit.

During the night we gleaned from them further particulars of the state of affairs in the interior; and their tale fully accounted for the sudden arrival of the Siamese army. It appeared that, in execution of the plan of operations which Haggi Loūng, at Parlis, had told us was going to be pursued, the Malays organised an army, and sent it under their best sol-

dier, Tonkoo Mahomet Type-etam, to attack the province of Ligor, and so keep the Siamese acting on the defensive. Great success for awhile attended the Malays: they swept through the tributary state of Patani, gained numbers of adherents, put all of the enemy to the sword and eventually, as we already knew, captured and sacked Sangorah.

Meanwhile, a division of the Siamese forces, ten thousand strong, under the Rajah of Ligor, threw themselves across the Quedah frontier, intercepted all Type-etam's communications, cut him off from home, and, by forced marches and admirable generalship, surprised an important military position called "Allegagou;" stormed two batteries, which commanded it, and put to death the entire garrison of six hundred Malays. The unfortunate force under Type-etam, in Sangorah, was thus cut off and destroyed in detail; he and a few desperate men only escaped by cutting their way through the Siamese army, and rejoined their compatriots at Quedah.

Until the capture of "Allegagou," the Siamese army had been without cannon of any sort, either field or siege pieces, but there they had succeeded in capturing one of the former, besides several others fitted for position-guns; and this, of course, rendered

them all the more formidable to the Malays. The atrocities the Malays accused them of perpetrating were truly fearful, and a war of extermination was evidently their policy. A panic had consequently taken place in Quedah; and not only were the women and children of the pirates connected with the late inroad anxious to escape, but we learned that the Malays who had formerly submitted to the Siamese rule, and lived in the province until Prince Abdullah made his rash attempt to repossess himself of it, were now flying before the irritated army of His Golden-tufted Majesty.*

Hardly had we despatched our communicative friends to the "Hyacinth," when the emissary, Inchi Laa, was again seen coming off. He had ceased to be as reserved as of yore, returned very warmly our English salutation of shaking hands, and smiled with good-natured incredulity at our sanguine hopes of soon having possession of Quedah. He assured us that every mile the Siamese advanced into the disputed territory only rendered their perfect defeat more certain; and he explained away the loss of Allegagou, and the body of men under Tonkoo Mahomet Type-etam, by saying that the enemy far

* "Golden-tufted Majesty," one of the many titles of the Emperor of Siam.

outnumbered the Malays, and that the wisdom of attacking Sangorah, although it had cost many valuable men, was proved by the long delay of the Siamese forces.

The Inchi was most indignant—and we all cordially joined him in that feeling—at the fearful atrocities which, he told us, had been perpetrated by our Siamese allies; and he swore by Allah no Malay man had ever been known to wantonly torture women and children, as those devils did. "If," said Inchi Laa, "the woman and the child, because they are our country people, deserve death—let them die! but, beyond death or slavery, there should be no punishment for those who cannot help themselves." An opinion to which we all uttered an "Amen." He then craved permission to proceed to the "Hyacinth," to make arrangements for the departure of a number of defenceless creatures whom Mahomet Said wished to send to Penang and Province Wellesley, to save them from the wrath of the Siamese.

We smiled at the cool confidence betokened by such a request; and on asking Inchi Laa "Why he thought it probable the English would allow the women and offspring of men declared to be pirates, to escape and seek an asylum under the very flag

they had abused?" his reply was characteristic: "Every Malay-man knows, Tuhan, that the white men (Orang-putihs) can fight; but every Malay-man knows that they war with men, and not against women and children!"

We accepted his neatly-turned compliment, politic though it might be at such a time, and determined not to do aught unworthy of so high a reputation. Inchi Laa returned a few hours afterwards, looking supremely happy, and delivered to the senior officer of the boats, Mr. Barclay, an order to allow all unarmed vessels to pass out, provided they only carried women and children; but on no account to permit more than just men enough to navigate the craft to Penang, and they also to be unarmed.

In the evening a message came from Tonkoo Mahomet Said, to express his grateful thanks for the humanity extended to the defenceless portion of the population, and to warn us that they would start at midnight!

It was too late to remonstrate at the choice of an hour which looked very like an attempt to evade the necessary search by our boats, so we merely gave notice, that all vessels trying to pass would be sunk, and that they were to come alongside, to

enable us to assure ourselves of no breach in the agreement.

For several days past we had observed that great numbers of canoes, small prahus, and native craft had accumulated along the face of the unfortunate town. These, doubtless, had been driven down from the upper part of the river by the progress of the enemy. As the day advanced, the signs of an approaching exodus gave us some cause for anxiety lest, under the plea of a flight, a large body of men should be brought down to board the two gun-boats and cutter — which was all the force we had. We therefore took every precaution: cleared for action; loaded our guns; placed one gun for sweeping the deck with musket-balls, and the other to command the narrow gap through the stockade, by which, whether as fugitives or foes, the pirates must come out. Sunset and the brief twilight of an Asiatic evening soon passed into a calm but very dark night, adding still more to the difficulties of our position; and the obscurity, for a while, was so little broken by unusual appearances, that we began to fancy the Malays had postponed their flight.

CHAP. XIII.

The Lull before the Storm. — The Exodus. — A Scene of Confusion and Distress. — The Malay Chieftain's Wife. — Baju-Mira. — The Convoy. — An extraordinary Appeal. — Midwifery simplified. — A Night-scene. — A Midshipman's Emotions. — A Malayan Houri. — Resign my Charge and return. — An Attempt to enslave the Fugitives.

THE flood-tide continued to flow into the Quedah river until about ten o'clock, and beyond the hum of voices from the town, and the melancholy wailing noise made by the sentries in "calling their posts"— there was not until top of high water anything to denote the scene of activity which so soon ensued. But just after the ebb-tide commenced to run out, at eleven o'clock, the whole population of fort and town rose as if it were one man. The hoarse shouts of men, the shrill cries of womankind, and the bleating of goats, with many a shrill crow from the everlasting game-cocks, betokened some unusual commotion. Torches in great numbers soon threw their glare of light over a perfect multitude on the banks

of the stream beyond the fort, and evidently embarking for the projected flight.

The splash of oars and paddles was next heard, and then a perfect *débâcle* took place, for out of the narrow opening of the stockade, where the pent-up tide caused the stream to shoot through like a rapid, flowed out upon us prahus of all sizes, canoes, *topes*, and even rafts, laden as heavily as they could be with human beings.

It was indeed a wild and wretched scene, strange and exciting though it might be to us. The torches carried in some of the canoes threw a vivid light over the black river and jungle, and brought out in strong relief the groups of excited men and women. "Anchor! anchor!" we shouted, "or we must fire." "Mercy! mercy!" shrieked the women and old grey-bearded men. The nicodars yelled out orders, invoking all the saints of Islam. Babies struck in with their shrill piccolos, and the wifeless, womanless garrison left in Quedah seemed determined to show what good heart they were still in, by the wild, yet not unmusical cry of "Jaggā, jaग-gāā!" or, "Watch there! watch!" We, the blockaders, got under weigh, and slashed to and fro across the entrance of the stream, firing an occasional blank cartridge at some craft that tried to escape being searched,

having perhaps on board more than the proper complement of men, or, as in one case, because some notorious pirate who had rendered himself amenable to our laws, was desirous of escaping an interview with a petty jury and a British recorder at Penang.

By four o'clock in the morning the exodus was over, and we lay at anchor with a black mass of native vessels of every size and shape around us: many of the canoes threatening to sink alongside, we were forced to take the unfortunates upon our decks, adding still more to the scene of confusion. My boat's crew, bloodthirsty Malays though they were, employed themselves from midnight to day-dawn boiling and serving out rice to the half-starved women and children.

The sun rose upon the strange scene, just as all were falling to rest from an anxious and sleepless night. On counting the fugitive vessels we found one junk, one tope, five large prahus, and one hundred and fifteen smaller craft, the whole of them containing probably three thousand souls, of which two-thirds were women and the remainder made up of children, old decrepit men, and a few adult Malays, to convoy the whole and navigate the different vessels to a place of safety. Two births took place during this sad night of confusion.

During the day we were employed thinning out the people embarked in some of the most unsafe canoes. We searched and discovered some secreted arms, and forced several men (where we found their numbers more than sufficient) to land and take their chance, instead of endangering the lives of the women and children. In the junk, independent of a mob of women and children of every shade and class, we discovered the wife and family of Tonkoo Mahomet Said. He had evidently been afraid to avow his intention of sending them, and merely trusted to the promise that had been given to respect all women and children. The Tonkoo was not disappointed; and Captain Warren ordered me to embark the chieftainess and family, and convoy them, as well as the junk and larger prahus, to Penang, not only to ensure them against shipwreck, but to guard against the dashing enterprise of His Siamese Majesty's brig, the "Teda Bagoose," which to our sorrow made her appearance off Quedah just at this juncture. She had ascertained that the Malay boats only contained women and children, and her captain was, to use our English seamen's phrase, "full of fight."

Towards evening a fine fair wind sprang up off the land, and we prepared to start. I placed two trustworthy men on board each of the junks, and in two

of the largest prahus, and receiving on board Mahomet Said's family, we all weighed and made sail just at dark, the canoes, rafts, and other frail craft proceeding close along the jungle's edge.

The largest junk sailed so badly that I had to take her in tow; and the breeze freshened so much as to make me feel very anxious for all my deeply-laden convoy, and so far as a youth of seventeen can feel the responsibility of his position, I think I did mine.

The chieftainess was a slight graceful-looking woman, almost as fair as a Spaniard, with a very sweet expression of countenance, though it was not youthful, and bore deep traces of care stamped upon it. She was neatly clad in shawl-pattern materials. Her family consisted of a lovely girl, of perhaps twelve years old, and two babies in arms, attended by a nurse. Midshipmen are a susceptible race, and I was no exception to the rule. I felt as an embryo Nelson should do — a perfect knight errant, and I, in quest of a lady-love, had, by a freak of good fortune, lighted on a pirate's beautiful daughter: the whole thing was delightful, and I should like to have seen "John Company" dare to touch a hair of the head of Baju-Mira while I was by. Poor Baju-Mira, or Red-jacket, as I at once christened the object of my admiration, in consequence of her wearing the pret-

tiest Indian-shawl jacket that ever was seen, was perfectly unconscious of the sudden attachment she had awakened in one who, from her frightened fawn-like ways, she evidently supposed was only one of the ruthless destroyers of the amiable fraternity to which her parents belonged. However, that was perfectly immaterial to me. I had made up my mind to be her slave; that was enough for any-one whose poetry had not been, so to speak, knocked out of him by fair Dulcineas. We cleared out my cabin, removed all the hatches, put a screen across the deck, to give the party as much privacy as possible, and indeed did all we could to make our passengers at their ease. The lady descended into the cabin with her infants and nurse, and Baju-Mira had a couch formed upon deck on one side of the hatchway, whilst two of the chieftainess's retainers, most grim-looking Malays, squatted themselves down near at hand, evidently for the purpose of watching over the party—an arrangement I willingly assented to, though, Heaven knows, nothing could have been more kind or respectful to them than all my crew were, from Jadee downwards.

The night was clear and starlit, but the north-east monsoon blew fresh, as it often does towards its close; the prahus, which I had ordered to keep close to me,

laboured heavily in the sea, and leaked so as to require constant baling, the women and children working for their lives with a very primitive sort of bucket, made from the bark of a species of palm-tree. In the middle watch one of the prahus sailed close alongside of us, and the men I had put in her hailed to say that one of the women was about to bless her lord with an addition to the family. I desired the fellows to hold their tongues and proceed on their course; the nicodar, or captain of the prahu, would hear of no such thing, and begged to be allowed to speak to me.

I lowered our sails, and consented that he should jump on board the gun-boat; and in a trice I found a Malay clutching me round the legs, and, with tears in his eyes, imploring me to go on board the prahu to help his wife. I assured the man I was no doctor, and could do no good, and desired Jadee to tell him as much, for by ill-luck I had left Jamboo on board the cutter with Mr. Barclay. My assurances were thrown away upon the husband; I was a white man, and must be a doctor. Even Jadee seemed to think it purely false modesty upon my part, and argued, from my skill in curing slight derangements in the health of my crew (thanks to a few pills and some salts in the medicine-chest), that a knowledge of surgery

in all its branches was the natural inheritance of his commander. I never was so puzzled in all my life; and finding escape from their importunities impossible, I consented to give the only assistance in my power. The husband, delighted, shouted for the prahu to come alongside, and I heard him jump on board of her, shouting that the white doctor was coming, while I went below for my prayer-book. Jadee and I then went on board, and after much squeezing reached a miserable little cabin, inside which, behind a screen, and surrounded by a crowd of women, the poor sufferer lay. Jadee, fully impressed with the idea that I was about to perform some incantation only second to his recipe for "killing the wind," looked as solemn and nervous as if he expected a demon to be instantly raised. My medicine was, however, a very simple one: I made Jadee hold a lantern, and desiring all around me to be silent, I proceeded to read a few prayers from my prayer-book, addressed to Him who is the merciful God alike of Malay and white man; and then ordering the woman a good cup of tea from my little stock, I told the husband that God was great, and that, if He pleased, all would be well, and returned to my own vessel, leaving those in the prahu evidently much impressed with my value as a Bedan. In due time, about day-break, one of my scampish crew held

up on board the prahu a diminutive reddish-looking morsel of humanity, and assured me the lady was "as well as could be expected," the wag informing me that he recommended the baby to be called after our gun-boat, "Numero Tega!" a name almost as characteristic as that of the sailor's child, who, to insure having a long one — none of your Jems and Bills — was christened "Ten Thousand Topsail-sheetblocks!"

It was about three in the morning, just after my first essay in the surgical way, and as dawn was breaking, that I seated myself on the deck, close aft against the taffrail on the lee quarter of my vessel, and, heartily tired with six-and-thirty hours' work, dropped into a sort of dog-sleep, my head resting on the sheet of the mainsail, which was set. My thoughts, however, would not sleep, but continued to skip in all the odd jumble of a dream over the scenes which had been thrust upon me within so short a space of time. Inchi Lan came chasing the "Teda Bagoose" with thousands of torches! Baju-Mira creesed me in the most approved style of Malay romance! old Tonkoo Said made me read prayers to a whole haremful of women in an interesting condition! and the Lords of the Admiralty were busy trying me by a court-martial, for having women on board a vessel fly-

ing Her Majesty's pendant! when a cry on the quarter-deck suddenly awoke me to the realities of what my good-hearted first lieutenant used to call this "sublunary vale of tears." I saw poor little Baju-Mira standing up and rubbing her eyes, uttering that plaintive, subdued cry which children make when awakened suddenly from a sound sleep. I fancied she had awakened in alarm, and so did the helmsman, who was close by me; but in another moment, as the gun-boat bent over to the breeze, she gave another sharp sob, and then, to my horror, walked or rather sprang overboard; but happily the mainsail stopped her, and as it touched her breast she started on one side with a shriek, and awoke as I caught hold of her.

Now would be the moment for a romantic climax, but, alas! there was only a general hubbub. The two sleeping Malays on guard, and the mother, nurse, and poor weeping Baju-Mira, had to be soothed, and to have explained to them that the latter had in her sleep nearly walked overboard; and to complete the riot, Jadee, who had been sleeping forward, rushed aft waving his abominable creese, followed by a dozen of his men. When Baju-M[illegible] a good cry,—don't laugh reader, I ke[illegible]erchief in which the little Hebe

wept for a long, long time, and only sent it to the wash when I was equally bad about an ox-eyed peri of Ceylon — the good chieftainess said, "Ah! Touhan, my poor child has seen and suffered enough these last few days to make her mad, much more to cause her to walk in her sleep;" and I have no doubt she had. Badinage apart, Baju-Mira was lovely enough to have touched a tougher heart than mine: at her age, an Indian girl is just blooming into womanhood, and as lovely and as fresh as a flower can be whose beauty in that fiery clime is but of a day. The child, the woman, mother, and old age tread on one another's heels, under an equatorial sun, with painful rapidity; perhaps it is on that account that the short heyday of an Indian or Malay girl is all the more romantic and lovable. Baju-Mira was not tall, but beautifully proportioned, and her slight waist seemed too small to support her exquisitely rounded bust; the neck and head were perfectly classical, and betokened Arab rather than Malay blood — an intermixture which was all the more evident in her oval face and beautiful features. Besides the usual quantity of petticoats, made in her case of very fine Indian shawls or Cashmeres, she had an under vest of red silk, fitting tightly to her figure, and over this another loose one of the same bright

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wept for a long, long time, and only sent it to the wash when I was equally bad about an ox-eyed peri of Ceylon — the good chieftainess said, "Ah! Touhan, my poor child has seen and suffered enough these last few days to make her mad, much more to cause her to walk in her sleep;" and I have no doubt she had. Badinage apart, Baju-Mira was lovely enough to have touched a tougher heart than mine: at her age, an Indian girl is just blooming into womanhood, and as lovely and as fresh as a flower can be whose beauty in that fiery clime is but of a day. The child, the woman, mother, and old age tread on one another's heels, under an equatorial sun, with painful rapidity; perhaps it is on that account that the short heyday of an Indian or Malay girl is all the more romantic and lovable. Baju-Mira was not tall, but beautifully proportioned, and her slight waist seemed too small to support her exquisitely rounded bust; the neck and head were perfectly classical, and betokened Arab rather than Malay blood — an intermixture which was all the more evident in her oval face and beautiful features. Besides the usual quantity of petticoats, made in her case of very fine Indian shawls or Cashmeres, she had an under vest of red silk, fitting tightly to her figure, and over this another loose one of the same bright

and becoming hue, not unlike an Albanian jacket. Her

> " ebon locks,
> As glossy as a heron's wing
> Upon the turban of a king,"

were gathered off her face by the edge of a silk tartan scarf of native manufacture, which she wrapped round her head or person as was necessary; perfect feet and hands, strongly stained with henna, completed the picture of the little belle of Quedah; though I feel my attempt to delineate her falls short, far short, of the pretty trembling dream-like creature.

At sunrise, Jadee reported to me that one of the prahus was missing, and, strangely enough, one of those in which, for better security, I had stationed two of my own Malays. Desiring all the convoy to proceed to a spot called Quala Morbu, or Dove River, we altered course for the Bounting Islands, thinking the missing vessel might have parted company by accident, and gone there in the hope of meeting me. After four hours' search I discovered the truant quietly at anchor in a secluded cove. The men I had put into her did not give a very intelligible reason for having parted company, and I therefore removed them, and warned the master that martial law would be summarily applied if I saw any further attempt

to evade my surveillance. Hardly had I again got my convoy together, and before a fine breeze all of us were rapidly nearing Penang, when I met the "Diamond" gun-boat, and in obedience to the orders I had received, handed over my charge to her, parting from the chieftainess and my angelic Baju-Mira with mutual expressions of kindness and good-will.

The "Emerald," taut on a wind, began to make the best of her way back again, and after I had had a good rest, Jadee came to tell me that my two men (in the prahu which had parted company during the night, and given me so much trouble) had come aft to make a confession and beg forgiveness. It appeared that the nicodar, and three natives left in the prahu to navigate her, had during the night pointed out to my men an easy mode of realising a large sum of money, and escaping the drudgery of their present life: it was simply to give me the slip, and carry the prahu, with its freight of women and children, to the coast of Sumatra, where they might be sold at highly remunerative prices! My men, it appears, were afraid to accede at once to the proposal, but I fear they expressed a willingness to share in the profits and risk if the nicodar could succeed in shaking off the society of the

gun-boat. I had, however, stopped their cruise by seeking them amongst the "Bountings." I must say I was very angry at my Malays for not giving me information of the treachery of the nicodar in time to have handed over that worthy to the mercy of the Siamese brig "Teda Bagoose," whose gallant captains were like raging lions at the escape of all the fugitives: but for the men themselves, I merely tried to point out the villany of selling poor creatures into slavery who were going under their escort to what they supposed a place of safety. They, however, were rather obtuse upon this point, and evidently looked upon the women and children as merely amounting to a certain total, at from forty to fifty dollars a head, and only sent into the world to minister to man's pleasures, or to be sold for his especial benefit.

CHAP. XIV.

Malay Slave Trade fostered by the Dutch. — Brutal System pursued by the Portuguese. — Slavery doubtless founded by the Mahometans.—Retribution has overtaken the Portuguese. — An enlightened Policy most likely to eradicate Slavery and Piracy. — Close Blockade. — The Call of the Siamese Sentries. — The Call of the Malay Sentries. — Deaths from Want of Water. —Kling Cruelty. — The Trial and Verdict, and Punishment. — Siamese Tortures. — Novel Mode of impaling a Rebel. — Extraordinary Palm-spears.—Remarks upon Native Governments.

THERE can be no doubt that slavery and the slave trade exist to a very serious extent throughout the Malayan archipelago: it is carried on in a petty way, but still with all the miseries of the middle passage. The great mart for the disposal of the slaves is the pepper plantations of Sumatra, which are in the hands of the natives, although the Dutch claim a sovereignty over them; and the native and Dutch planters on the coast of Borneo readily take the slaves off the hands of the Malay slave-catcher, and work them to death in the plantations and gold or

antimony mines of those countries. The Dutch say they discountenance the slave trade; they do so, however, merely in outward show. The first law they lay down for their Eastern subjects is, implicit submission to their cold-blooded system of political and commercial monopoly; the next thing is, the Lowland motto of "Mak' money; honestly if you can, but mak' money;" and I was told by both English and French captains of merchantmen employed collecting cargoes of pepper, that boats full of slaves used to arrive as constantly for sale at the different places they had visited on the Sumatran coast, as they formerly did in Rio de Janeiro harbour or the Havannah. We can understand, under such circumstances, what a harvest the slave-trader would reap in a province like Quedah, where the unhappy inhabitants were placed with the alternative of being impaled as rebels by Siamese, on the one hand, or hanged as pirates by Europeans, upon the other. To sell themselves, or fly for life and limb to the nicodar of a prahu, who would carry them elsewhere, and dispose of them for so much a head, was merely, in such a case, a happy alternative; and in this, as in much else connected with the habits of the unfortunate Malay, we have incurred no small amount of responsibility.

Much, however, as the Dutch are to blame for their *present* spirit of aggression and selfish monopoly, in awakening the reckless spirit of retaliation, turmoil, and disorganisation of the Malays in the Eastern Archipelago, it falls far short of their former policy; and it is a question whether they or the Portuguese did most for two centuries, by a cold-blooded system of cruelty, towards demoralising the unhappy Malays; and assuredly, but for their warlike and nautical habits, the race would have been exterminated.

A history of the system they pursued, I am not now purposing to write; but inasmuch as it bears upon the Malay's present character of pirates and slave dealers, I may point out that, before European ships had as yet entered the Indian ocean, fleets of Chinese junks, as well as the unwarlike traders of Indostan, used to carry on a brisk commercial traffic with, and through, the Malayan archipelago, which, had piracy been as rife in the thirteenth century as it was in the early part of the present one, would have been utterly impossible; and slavery was, we know, unknown in Java at that time; and that is the only Malayan state of which authentic historical records have been preserved.

Doubtless with the introduction of the Mahometan creed into the Archipelago, slavery became a funda-

mental institution of the Malays; but the slavery allowed by Mahomet is of the mildest form, and the Koran especially enjoins kindness to the slave.

But the Pope and Mahomet had a hard race to win the souls of the Malays; indeed, many native states only embraced Islamism after the conquest of Malacca by the Christians! God save the mark! The houris carried the point, maybe, against Purgatory. Indeed, the important group of islands known in the present day as the Celebes only accepted Mahomet in 1495, and that was nine years after Bartolemo Diaz rounded the Cape of Tempests, as he honestly styled the southern promontory of Africa. The Portuguese treated the Malays as infidels; and, as one writer, De Conto, observes of them, "they are well made and handsome, but foul in their lives, and much addicted to heinous sin;" *ergo*, the Portuguese robbed, shot down, and conquered them, just as the Spaniards, more successfully, did the Mexican and Peruvian.

Resistance to this iniquity has, I believe, made the Malay what he now is; and one can only rejoice in the decay, and pray for the total annihilation of a people who, like the Portuguese, so sadly abused the glorious mission the Almighty called upon them to fulfil, when to them were first given the keys of

the golden East — its docile millions and untold riches.

When an Englishman, in the Straits of Malacca, sees a man with European features but dark skinned as the natives, wanting in courage, energy, or character — a pariah whom the very Indostanee contemns, — and hears that that man is a Portuguese, he recognises the just retribution of an avenging God; and on reading such a paragraph as the following, — "All these people (Malays) that have fallen into the hands of the Portuguese have been made prisoners of war. Every year there is taken of them for sale a great number to Malacca."* He naturally exclaims, the Malays have had their revenge!

One example of the Dutch policy may be quoted, and it is no singular instance of their phlegmatic cruelty: — John Peterson Koen, their most illustrious Governor-General of the Indies, exterminated the original inhabitants of the Banda, or Spice Islands, and replaced them by slaves. With such examples before them, can it be felony in the Malay to imitate the boasted civilisation of the white man? The piratical acts now committed in the Malayan archi-

* The Decade, v. book vii.

pelago are, I firmly believe, the result of the iniquities practised upon the inhabitants in the olden day; and the Dutch, Spaniards, and English, even at the present time, are too prone to shoot down indiscriminately any poor devils who, for the first time in their lives, are told, with powder and shot arguments, that war, as carried on by them, is piracy by our laws. We shall never eradicate by the sword an evil which has become the second nature of every Malay who is, or who aspires to be, a free man. For three centuries the Dutch and Spaniards have been fighting with the Hydra which their tyrannical despotism and commercial policy are ever fostering; and our extension of a free and enlightened system of government through the Straits of Malacca has done more to quell piracy and slavery there — by leading the naturally mercantile Malay to legitimate sources of emolument and occupation — than all the ball-cartridge and grape-shot which have been so ruthlessly lavished upon them.

Of slavery as it exists or existed amongst the Malays themselves, though it does not apply, I fear, to the poor creatures under Chinese, Dutch, or Spanish masters, we have the testimony of Mr. Craufurd, one of our best authorities. He says: "The distinction between the slave and freeman, though it exists

amongst the Malays, is not offensively drawn: the slave is not a mere chattel; he may possess or inherit property, purchase his freedom, and has in other respects his prescribed rights."

Many of my crew in the gun-boat had in their youth been bought or sold as slaves; Jadee himself had been one, and none of them appeared to think much of their sufferings whilst in that condition;—but I have dwelt long enough upon this subject, and will pass on to my tale.

After reporting to Captain Warren the fulfilment of my task, I again returned to Quedah river, and anchored alongside my old friend the cutter. The Siamese advanced parties had already closed down upon the unlucky fortress, and throughout the night a constant fire between the respective outposts was kept up. Our friend the "Dove-cot" (described at page 151.) was rattling away at everything which moved along the edge of the jungle, and now and then the heavy boom of a gun, and the crashing sound of the grape-shot through the trees, gave testimony to the fact that the Siamese had indeed arrived. The night-calls of the opposing forces were peculiar, and seemed to be used as much for the purpose of cheering on their respective parties, as for the purpose of showing where they were.

The Siamese used an instrument like a pair of castanets, made, I fancy, of two pieces of bamboo; and admirably it answered its purpose. At certain intervals it would be sounded so faintly as to imitate some of the thousand insects of the jungle, then a long repetition of the same note would die faintly away in the distance; after that came a sharp short note, taken up in the same way, followed by a general rattle, as if all the "gamins" of London were playing upon pieces of slate. Hardly had the line of Siamese outposts ceased to show they were wide awake, when the Malay sentries would begin. Their cry consisted of the word "Jagga," each man taking up the cry before his comrade to the right or left had finished, and then with one long-drawn cry the whole of the sentries cried Jag-gā-ā-ā together in a very musical manner; a moment's silence, and again a popping commenced at one another, with an occasional *mêlée*, in which the sharp rattle of the Siamese castanets would be heard from right to left, showing how perfectly their skirmishers were beleaguering the poor fort. Towards day-break all the fighting would cease; and we learnt that the Siamese light troops always then fell back upon the main body, still fifteen miles distant, near Elephant Mount.

Every night fresh parties of Malays passed out of the river in prahus, and canoes, and topes, which had been carefully hidden away in the tide-flooded jungle, ready for such an occasion, and to avoid destruction, should we have been called upon to make an attack by sea. The sufferings of these fugitives were truly harrowing; many of them had come down from distant parts of the peninsula, flying before the wrath of the Siamese, and finding but little sympathy from the Quedah Malays. Starved and wayworn, having lived for sad periods in constant dread of death and slavery, their appearance and the stories they told, realised a picture of such utter misery, that one almost wondered how life could be sweet enough to them to make it worth their while to flee onwards. Penang and Province Wellesley were however their Goshen, and all we could do for the poor creatures was to wish them God speed. One day, amongst the fugitive vessels, a large tope came out densely crowded with men, women, and children, of different nations: there were Chinese, Indostanees, and Malays; and the men were mostly shop-keepers and vagrants who followed on the heels of the Malayan pirates to buy and sell. Some delay naturally arose in ascertaining that there were no known pirates amongst them, and next morning we were shocked to learn,

on inquiring how all were on board of her, that several children and two women had died during the night from want of water!—a want not only we in the boats suffered from to some extent, but which we found to be very general with the people of Quedah; for the long-continued droughts had dried up all the wells, and obliged them to depend alone upon the river—a precarious means of supply now that the Siamese were at hand, and fired on all the watering parties. Going on board to relieve the sufferings of the unfortunate women, so far as our small stock of water would admit, we were informed by a Malay that there were two *private* jars of water in the "tope," and after some search we discovered two fat Bengalee merchants, or rather Klings*— a race who live on the seaboard of the Madras Presidency, and form a large portion of the Straits population—actu-

* Mr. Craufurd, in his valuable work upon the Archipelago, says Kling is a Malay term given to the natives of the Telinga nation, in Southern India. The trade and intercourse of the Telingas with the Archipelago is of great but unascertained antiquity, and still goes on. Many have settled in Malayia, and their mixed descendants are tolerably numerous. In the beginning of the sixteenth century, the Portuguese speak of them as carrying on trade at Malacca; and Barbosa describes them as "wealthy merchants of Coromandel, who traded in large ships."

ally seated upon water-jars, and refusing to share it amongst the dying creatures at their feet. They had been long enough among Englishmen to know that we should not approve of their conduct, and had artfully arranged their robes and personal property so as to aid in concealing the water.

I hardly know who was most indignant amongst us at this discovery; but Barclay and I held a drum-head court-martial upon the two brutes, and decided, *coute qui coute*, to give the black villains a lesson in humanity. We declared them guilty, and passed sentence of death, to be commuted for personal correction. The two culprits turned perfectly livid with fear; for Jadee, as usual, had his creese at hand, and a great big-boned coxswain of the cutter tucked up his sleeves, and requested permission to, what he called, "polish them off."

Barclay and I, however, did not want to figure in the Penang courts of law, and decided therefore on applying a correction to the Indian merchants where no bones would be broken, and where they would be very unwilling to produce proofs in open court of our illegal proceedings. Keeping our countenances like a pair of Solons, we had administered to them four dozen strokes with a piece of flat wood like a sleeve-

board, to the extreme delight of all our seamen, and the astonishment of the fugitives, who had resigned themselves to the idea that the Klings were merely men of strong religious principles, who would not share their water with heretics.

Inchi Laa paid us a long visit one evening, and, unsought by us, proceeded to detail fearful stories of the cruelties exercised by the Siamese. At the time, I gave him credit for magnifying facts; but from other sources, such as Jamboo, who knew a good deal of the Siamese habits, and a Malay man in my crew, who had served in a Siamese naval force equipped at Bankok, I heard sufficient to verify some of the horrid atrocities committed. Many of their cruelties will not bear repetition; but two refined modes of torture I will venture to describe; and the Inchi assured me that some of their unhappy countrymen and women had been subjected to them.

One was cooking a human being alive: a hollow tree, either naturally so, or scooped out by manual labour, was left with merely its bare stem standing; into it a prisoner was put naked, his hands tied behind his back, and a large piece of fat lashed on his head; the tree was then carefully coated with an unctuous mud, to prevent its ignition, or, if it did ignite,

that it might merely smoulder, and then a slow steady fire was maintained round it, the unfortunate victim's sufferings being by these means terribly prolonged, his shrieks and exclamations being responded to by the exultant shouts of his executioners.

Another torture was that of carrying the pirate or rebel down to the banks of a river where a peculiar species of palm-tree grows, and choosing a spot in the mud where the sprout of a young plant was just found shooting upwards, which it does at the rate of several inches in twenty-four hours, they would construct a platform around it, and lash their miserable victim in a sitting posture over the young tree, so that its lance-like point should enter his body, and bring on mortification and death by piercing the intestines — in short, a slow mode of impaling.

Of the possibility of this last torture being performed, I can almost vouch; for although not botanist enough to name the peculiar species of palm tree which is used, I have often seen it growing both on the banks of the Setouè and Parlis rivers. I believe it to be the Nipa palm, but I am by no means certain. It grows to no great height, and when full grown has little if any stem, the large and handsome

leaves waving over the banks of the Malayan stream like a bunch of green feathers springing from the mud. The young plant springs up from the earth in a peculiar manner; the embryo leaves are wrapped in solid mass together, *round their own stems*, forming one solid green triangular-shaped stick, ranging in length from four to six feet, and having a point as hard and sharp as a bayonet.

These palm-spears, if I may use the term, the Malays pluck before the leaves attempt to expand, and in such a state they make a formidable lance. Jadee assured me, sufficiently so to enable a man to pierce the tough under cuticle of an alligator. I have often amused myself throwing them like a dart. The rapidity with which these young plants shoot up in the rich vegetation and sweltering heats of an equatorial jungle is almost inconceivable: the Malays declared that they might be *seen growing*, but Jamboo told me that he had often known a sprout to shoot an inch and a half in a night, from which we may picture to ourselves the sufferings of the unfortunate Malay impaled on one of them.

The well-known torture of rubbing people over with wild honey, and lashing them to trees near the large venomous ants' nests of the country, until bit-

ten to death by them and other insects, was, we were told, commonly practised, but the climax to the tale of horror was the gambling which took place upon the capture of an unfortunate Malay woman who happened to be *enceinte*, the stakes depending upon whether the infant was a boy or a girl, the diabolical game concluding with the death of the mother, to decide who were winners.

Such are the cruelties perpetrated by these wretched native monarchies; such have been the miseries which throughout Pegu, Birmah, Siam, and Malayia, first one master and then another has practised upon their unhappy subjects; and yet philanthropists and politicians at home maunder about the unjust invasion of native rights, and preach against the extension of our rule, as if our Government, in its most corrupt form, would not be a blessing in such a region, and as much, if not more, our duty to extend, as a Christian people, than to allow them to remain under native rulers, and then to shoot them for following native habits. In later years, it has been my sorrow to observe among another branch of this ill-starred Malayan race—the poor Otaheitians—the evil effects of winning them from warlike habits without giving them British protection, for in that case our zeal in teaching them to turn their swords into

pruning-hooks, has caused them to fall an easy prey to piratical Frenchmen.

It is possible that Inchi Laa's sad tale of Malay suffering was purposely told us to prepare our minds for the bloody scene enacted upon the morrow, and to justify the horrid retaliation.

CHAP. XV.

The Massacre of the Prisoners in Quedah Fort. — The alarmed Barber. — Inchi Laa repudiates the Act. — The Vultures' Feast. — Captain Warren visits the Siamese Camp. — The Siamese Army. — Renewed Vigour in the Operations. — The Capture of the Battery. — The Flight of the Harem. — Fugitives no longer able to escape by Sea. — Narrow Escape of my Crew. — Inchi Laa surrenders. — Struck by a Whirlwind. — The last Broadside. — The Chiefs escape. — Quedah Fort abandoned.

THE Siamese prisoners in the hands of the Malay chieftains had, after the completion of the defences of Quedah fort, been employed digging a reservoir, called, in India, a tank, for the purpose of collecting rain. Every day these wretches were marched out to their tasks and brought back again; but on the day after the visit of the Inchi, we observed that a more than usual number of Malays accompanied them, and that several chiefs of importance were among the escort.

The spot was too distant for us to see all that took place, but our attention was attracted by piteous cries and loud shouts, and the rush and confusion of an

evident *mêlée:* the Malays in the garrison crowded upon the parapet, and appeared very excited in voice and gesture. Suddenly, a Chinaman from the town was seen running towards our anchorage, followed, directly his object was observed, by a couple of Malays; several shots were fired at the fugitive, but when under cover of our vessels, we discharged a musket over his head, to show we claimed him, and his pursuers resigned him to our custody. I never, before or since, saw a man so horror-stricken as this poor Chinese barber was—for he had all the instruments of his trade about him, and had, apparently, dropped his razor and fled, stricken by some sudden fear. With much ado the man was soothed into telling us, crying all the while with nervous excitement, that the noise which was just subsiding on shore, had been the death-shrieks of all the ill-fated Siamese prisoners; that Tonkoo Mahomet Type-etam had been burning for revenge ever since his late discomfiture at Allegagou, and the Malays generally were frantic at the horrors perpetrated on their countrymen: in retaliation, therefore, they had that morning marched out three hundred Siamese (all they had in their hands) to the margin of the tank, and there drawing his creese, Type-etam had given the signal to fall on, by plunging it into the

body of a prisoner; and the bodies were thrown into the tank, which lay in the road over which the Siamese troops must advance to the capture of Quedah. The Chinaman happened to be a witness of the massacre, and not knowing whether Type-etam might not take it into his head to clear off the Chinese likewise, he, like a prudent barber, decamped at once.

The murderers marched back soon afterwards, and lying, as we now did, close to the stockade, we did not think, from their appearance, they looked very elated with their bloody achievement; still one or two ruffians were very excited, and waved their spears and muskets, as if promising us a similar fate should we fall into their hands. I need hardly say we were most indignant at such a cold-blooded act of cruelty, and it would have been an evil hour for Type-etam, had he fallen into the hands of our people: even Jadee declared it unmanly, and, as usual, took great care to explain to me, that the gentlemanly dogs by whom he had been brought up would have acted very differently.

I upbraided Inchi Laa, the next time he visited us, for such an inhuman return to our captain's generous treatment of their defenceless women and children, and reminded him that, as pirates, there

was an English law which entitled us to twenty pounds a head for every one of his countrymen we sent out of the world.* The Inchi, I was glad to see, blushed, and vowed that Mahomet Said protested against the act, whilst Type-etam tried to justify it, on the ground of the dearth of provisions and water, the cruelty of the Siamese, and the bad policy of liberating such a body of enemies.

The keen sight of the vulture, or possibly its power of scent, was wonderfully exemplified on the day of the massacre; for although none of us had ever seen a vulture here before, within a few hours after it had taken place a number of those repulsive creatures were wheeling round and round over the bodies, and soon settled down to their filthy repast; only to rise for a short and lazy flight, when startled by some exchange of shots between the besiegers and besieged.

Habit reconciles many a disgusting sight to our ideas of what is natural; but I know nothing that, to a European as yet unhardened to it, seems so repulsive as that of a large bird feeding upon the corpse of a human being. Yet this soon became a common sight, for many a body floated down the stream, and, directly it grounded on the mud-flats, vultures would

* The head-money for pirates has been most wisely done away with very lately, after having been sadly abused.

be seen flapping their wings over their loathsome food.

A week passed away: the Malays still spoke confidently of being able to hold out in the fort until the bad weather should force the Siamese to retreat, and ourselves to abandon the blockade; and, moreover, they allowed it to leak out, that Datoo Mahomet Alee, from Parlis, was operating against the flank of the Siamese army, and prevented them making an assault upon Quedah.

On March 16th, a Siamese flag was seen waving on a tree at the mouth of the Jurlong river, north of Quedah river; and with a view to hastening the Siamese operations, Captain Warren decided upon visiting their head-quarters, and a message was soon sent to the Siamese general, informing him of his wish to do so.

Next day, elephants and a guard of honour were in waiting at the Jurlong. Captain Warren ascended it as far as possible, and then, accompanied by his gig's crew and an interpreter, mounted the elephants, and proceeded to Allegagou, where the general still was, although a division of his army was closely blockading Quedah fort by land. Captain Warren was received with the greatest honour, and had a house placed at his disposal, as well

as necessary food. The general informed him, that the diversion attempted by Datoo Mahomet Alee had been a perfect failure; the Datoo experiencing a total defeat, and losing a field-piece and abundance of powder and shot, which were now in the hands of the Siamese, to be used against the Quedah garrison.

The forces seen by Captain Warren, forming the main division of the army, were at least 15,000 strong, and consisted almost entirely of infantry and some elephants. Nearly 10,000 men were armed with good Tower flint muskets, which the General informed him had all been purchased from the Honourable Company, when they adopted the percussion-lock throughout the Indian army.

On the whole, Captain Warren was favourably impressed with the *matériel* and *personnel* of the native army co-operating with us, though very different from what a European one would have been. With a promise from the General to push on operations with all possible energy, Captain Warren embarked, with his gig's crew, in one of the native canoes, descended Quedah river, and, much to all our astonishment, passed the town and fort of Quedah without having his right to do so even challenged by the Malays; proving, at any rate, the

respect they entertained for the officer who had behaved so generously towards their wives and families.

The day after Captain Warren's return, the Siamese appeared to be about to carry their promise into execution with a hearty will; a heavy and continuous fire was kept up by the outposts, and the Malays were evidently falling back: the scrub and jungle prevented us seeing much, except the wounded as they were carried to the rear. The Siamese light guns commenced to range over the fort, and were fiercely replied to by the heavy eighteen-pounders on the bastions. News was obtained by Mahomet Said at the same time, from a prisoner, that the Siamese had beaten back Mahomet Alee; and the defence was thus rendered almost hopeless.

The Malays in the fascine battery were suffering very much, and the Siamese, with their field-pieces and musketry, were punishing the defenders terribly. We had to move a little out of range, so as to let these gentry fight out the duel. It soon became evident that the Siamese, sheltered by the jungle, had a great advantage over the Malays, who were in open ground; the three or four guns in the battery soon became silent, but the gingal battery fired away manfully, under a perfect storm of musket-balls—

fresh Malays ascending to take the place of those who were lowered down wounded. The Siamese dared not storm the battery, for it was commanded by the fort; but, at last, a lucky shot from our allies struck the "Dove-cot," and, I fancy, dismounted the culverin, for, in a minute or two afterwards, we saw the Malays roll it off the platform, and let it fall into the battery below; and then the whole garrison of the battery retreated into Quedah fort, carrying off their wounded and a couple of light guns.

The Siamese shouted with delight, and rattled their castanets: we cheered them on; and the Malays slashed away grape and canister into the jungle, sweeping down all that dared to step on the open ground, which formed a glacis round the old fort.

A cessation of firing took place in the afternoon, and that evening, the last instalment of women and children, and the last canoes in the river, escaped from Quedah. Amongst these fugitives were some fifteen damsels, the harem of Prince Abdullah; and they showed, by their good looks, that His Royal Highness was not deficient in taste. We declared all veils contrary to "*our national prejudices*," and the ladies, with a little giggling, resigned themselves very good-naturedly to our white men's ideas, and repaid us for a liberal repast of curry and rice, to

which they were immediately invited, by the kindest of smiles and the warmest thanks. Poor souls! the villanous "Teda Bagoose" had, in the name of His Siamese Majesty, protested against rebels being allowed to escape so easily, and had been placed in a commanding position, between Quedah and Penang, to intercept all the canoes and prahus. We, in consequence, had to refuse this last party a guarantee against capture, and recommended them to land, and walk down the coast into Province Wellesley — a journey of some forty or fifty miles. They willingly adopted our suggestion, but besought permission to encamp under shelter of our guns, until sufficient men could be got together to secure them an escort. The younger ladies, I may, without scandal, say, appeared far from unwilling to take advantage of the holiday they were now enjoying from the strict seclusion of the harem; and, in spite of the prudish reprovals of some of the older ladies of the party, became upon such good terms with some of the Malays who volunteered to protect them, that I fancy it was very doubtful whether Prince Abdullah would ever again recover the whole of the ladies of his household. An impromptu camp was rapidly formed on the southern point of the river, and we furnished them with sufficient food for present consumption.

These last fugitives assured us, that the fort now only contained about two hundred fighting men, under the two chiefs, Mahomet Said and Type-etam, and that they had sworn not to surrender.

All next day the firing was incessant on the land side of the works, and the Siamese were evidently taking advantage of the cover offered by the town, to make their approaches sufficiently close to try an escalade or assault. The excitement of being even spectators of the fight was naturally very great, and, as either party gained or lost an advantage, we cheered and shouted from the gun-boat and cutter. Occasionally, a round-shot or two, and then a shower of musket-balls, would oblige us to move out of immediate range, but only one attempt was fairly made to sink us, and this was the act of a desperate cut-throat in Quedah fort, called "Jaffa." He pointed a heavy twenty-four-pounder at my craft, only eight hundred yards distant, and, having loaded it with grape and canister, discharged it at us whilst we were seated at our afternoon meal of rice and fish. How all hands escaped seemed a miracle: the awnings were cut through in several places, the hull struck and grazed a good deal, but not one man was wounded. We cleared away our guns, and keenly watched all pieces pointed in our direction. The

attempt was not, however, repeated; and as from the angle of the fort which fired at us, we saw three or four men lower themselves down, jump into the river, and swim across so as to escape by land to the southward, we were led to anticipate, what we afterwards heard, that Jaffa and his friends, who had fired upon us, had been reproved by the chiefs, and made to fly the fort.

Just as the night was closing in, the Malays fired several smart salvos of artillery, and with loud cheers sallied out upon the Siamese, who had already commenced to occupy the town. Volumes of fire and smoke soon rolled over the unfortunate habitations, and the fight waxed hot and furious; reinforcements, however, soon arrived to our allies, and the Malays were beaten back with loss. To our astonishment, our old friend Inchi Laa, or "Gentleman Laa," as the sailors nicknamed him, came alongside, in a wretched canoe, and surrendered his sword. It bore marks of having been used to some purpose; but out of respect for the man's misfortunes, we did not ask many questions. He merely said, that they had made a sally from the fort, and been beaten back with loss; he had found himself cut off from the gate, and happily discovered a de-

cayed canoe before the enemy had observed him. He did not wish to return to Quedah. Poor Inchi! he seemed so alive to the kindness shown him; his mild and gentlemanly countenance spoke volumes in its sadness; and as he pressed us by the hand, bowing his head to touch it in token of gratitude, and in the same garb, and with his own sword in hand, swore to escort his countrywomen safely into Province Wellesley, and then surrender to our authorities if called upon. There was not a single soul of our party who did not sincerely regret that political expediency should have set us against a race which can produce such men.

That night and next day the firing of the fort and Siamese was constant; the Siamese were evidently puzzled; their six-pounders were not likely to breach the walls, and scaling a fort full of Malays was a disagreeable contingency which they required time to think about.

The north-east wind had now almost ceased to blow during the day-time, and the heat of the calm days was most oppressive; its disagreeables considerably increased by the smoke of fires, and the foul smell arising from the tank full of slaughtered prisoners, and many bodies of Malays and Siamese which had floated down the stream, and become either fixed in

the interstices of the stockade, or grounded upon the mud-banks.

In the afternoon, I experienced in the "Emerald" the first and only "white squall" which it has been my good fortune to fall in with — but "whirlwind" would be the more proper term. It was calm, and sultry to a degree, and we were listlessly lying about the decks, watching the desultory fight, when the town was suddenly enveloped in a storm of dust, straw, sticks, rags, and flags, flying up almost vertically in the air, as if enchanted; and before we could take a single precaution, such as battening down, we were struck by a squall. With one furious gust it threw us over on our beam-ends — for we lay across its path, tore away awnings and awning stanchions, and whisked them out of the gunboat, carried away the weather shrouds, blew the sails out of the gaskets, and half swamped us with water. Happily, it went as quickly as it came, and made one rub one's head, and wonder whether the whole affair had really taken place. Having to send men away to fetch the awning back was, however, a pretty good proof of the extraordinary violence of such a whirlwind; and the Malays assured me, that through the jungle such a violent squall will cut a lane, felling trees, as if so many woodmen had been

at work. The best term for it, though somewhat more French than English in character, was that used to me some years afterwards by a French naval officer, who, describing the horrors and dangers of a campaign dans les îles de l'Archipel, said, "Ah! mais nous avons eu des vents là! par exemple! des coups de vent effrayants—des vents du diable mon ami!"

We sat over our cup of tea discussing whether we should not, after all, have to take an active part in the fall of Quedah, when the black outline of the fort was illumined by flashes of artillery; they lasted some few minutes, and were followed by a dead silence. That volley was the knell of Quedah; for, in a short time, we heard cries, as of men drowning, near the stockade, and a number of my Malays, as well as some of Mr. Barclay's seamen, jumped into the water and swam to the rescue. They happily succeeded in saving six out of a dozen or fourteen men who had tried to swim across the river, but had failed. These men that we had saved were all natives of Upper India, and a fine six-foot fellow, directly he was able to speak, said, "We are the last of the garrison!"

Their tale was this:—Two nights ago, under cover of an attempt made by us against the Siamese,

Tonkoo Mahomet Said, Prince Abdullah, and Type-etam, with a select body of men, marched along the low-water mark of the sea, as far as the mouth of the Jurlong river, unseen by us or the Siamese; there they were met by Datoo Mahomet Alee and Haggi Loūng, who had marched from Parlis with some elephants to meet them; and the united chiefs had thus escaped, to renew their resistance in another quarter.

In order that the Siamese might still be detained off Quedah, a petty chieftain, whose name did not transpire, promised, with two hundred chosen men, to hold out for forty-eight hours: this he faithfully performed; and he directed the desperate sally in which Inchi Laa had been cut off from re-entering the fort.

Shortly afterwards, that chief, afraid to surrender to us after the treacherous attempt of one Jaffa to sink the gun-boat (an act all had disapproved of), swam across to the south side with the remaining men of his party, leaving fifteen Rajpoots, who were in the fort, to cover his escape by holding out, as they promised, for the space of two hours.

They it was who had fired the last broadsides, and then endeavoured to make good their retreat as the others had done; but not being as amphibious

as the Malays, they had been swept down by the tide upon the stockade, and the majority were drowned, or killed by alligators.

We respected these brave fellows; and although there was some suspicion of their being deserters from the Company's army, we gave them the benefit of the doubt; and, having made them swear to escort the women with all speed to Province Wellesley, we put them all under charge of Inchi Laa, and hastened their departure before the Siamese entered Quedah fort and observed their movements.

Barclay and I crawled through the mud, aroused all the fair ladies from their *al fresco* slumbers, told Inchi Laa he must be off—a piece of advice which needed no repetition,—and in a few minutes we were left alone, the stars and a young moon shining on the grey walls of the deserted stronghold.

CHAP. XVI.

The Siamese in Possession of the Fort. — Description of the Fort. — A Siamese Military Swell. — The Divan. — A Naval Ambassador. — The Ambassador demands Beef. — Curiosity of the Siamese Officials. —The Appearance of the Soldiery. — Mobility of the Siamese Troops. — Arms and Equipments. — The Buffalo of Malayia. —Mr. Airey, Master of the "Hyacinth." — Siamese Ingratitude not singular. — We proceed to Parlis.

At daybreak on March 20th, we observed the Siamese to be in possession of the fort, and shortly afterwards our Captain visited, and congratulated the authorities, who, however, did not appear to understand the immense moral aid we had afforded to his Golden-tufted Majesty of Siam, as well as the fatal hindrance we had been to fresh supplies being thrown into the unfortunate province.

In the course of the day, I visited Quedah, accompanied by Jadee, Jamboo, and a guard of honour of four of my own Malays, who my worthy coxswain insisted should be armed to the teeth, lest a fray should arise

with any of the Siamese irregulars. The gun-boat passed through the stockade, and from her I landed at the river end of a moat, which we found flanked the fort on its landward side. Neglect and ruin were everywhere apparent; the moat was half filled with rubbish, and evidently was left dry at low water: across it, opposite the only gateway not built up with stones, a temporary bridge had been thrown by the Siamese; this gateway faced the one long row of mat-built houses which constituted the once important town of Quedah; and as we passed through it, we could not help stopping to admire two magnificent brass guns, of Portuguese manufacture, which pointed down the road. The arms of the House of Braganza were still comparatively fresh upon the metal: but how have they, the descendants of Alfonso Albuquerque, degenerated!

The fort itself was of a rectangular form, and partook more of the character of a factory such as the Portuguese and Dutch, as well as ourselves, used to construct in the early days of Eastern discovery, than that of a place intended purely as a fortification. On the parapet, there were many handsome and heavy guns, mounted on very barbaric carriages; and within the walls, besides an old mosque or temple, and one or two stone-built houses, there was no lack

of mat residences of the usual Malay order of architecture.

It was a sad and ruinous scene: the robber and robbed had each been there in their turn; their handiwork lay before me, and standing upon the battlements looking over the rich land and luxuriant forest, on the one side, and the fine river with the blue Indian Ocean upon the other, I could not help feeling that man had sadly abused God's bounty.

Yet Quedah had not always been what it then was. When the first European visitor wrote of it, in 1516, he had occasion to say, that it was "a seaport to which an infinite number of ships resorted, trading in all kinds of merchandise; here come," he adds, "many Moorish* ships from all quarters; here, too, grows much pepper, very good and fine, which is conveyed to Malacca, and thence to China." And the province adjacent is still noted for the immense productiveness of its rice-fields, and the mountains are still rich in gold and tin. I was not left long to cogitate upon what Quedah had been, and what it could now be, if in better hands; for the Siamese soldiery were still ransacking every hole and corner for plunder, and failing in discovering much, some of them, who looked a little excited with "fighting water," or

* Moor was the term applied to the Mahometan traders.

"*bang*," ruffled up their feathers at my no less pugnacious Malays.

I therefore proceeded at once to pay my respects to the Siamese commandant, my interpreter addressing himself to a Siamese officer, or petty chief, who seemed to have charge of a guard at the gate. The worthy was leaning listlessly on some planks, and, when first addressed, gave himself as many airs as the most thoroughbred British subaltern in charge of three rank and file could have done. It made me smile to see how small the stride between the extremes of civilised and savage life: the listless apathy of fashion and the stoicism of the Indian are very, very close akin. Jamboo, however, understood the art of being a dragoman; and I fancy stirred up the subaltern by a glowing description of who and what I was, and by his gesticulation and apparent solemnity of bearing when addressing me, moved the spirit of the soldier, and he got up, and conducted me to the presence of the Siamese chief.

Passing through a crowd of very uncivil officers, who could only be distinguished from the men by wearing *silk* tartans of a blue and white pattern, I was presented to a tall intelligent person, the commandant. Jamboo made, in a disagreeably abject manner, a long speech on my behalf; in which

the Siamese tongue grated harshly on the ear after the soft and harmonious language of Malayia. The hall of audience was in one of the bastions, and was evidently the proper Divan. The courtier-like superciliousness of all the officers in the chief's retinue was deliciously amusing; and the great man was evidently wrath at something: maybe he was not struck with the importance of a British midshipman in his ambassadorial character; but I enjoyed the joke amazingly; for I had been ordered to give a message, and I determined to give it to no one but the chief, were he the Rajah of Ligor himself. I got it from my chief; I intended it should go to theirs. Jamboo passed several compliments between us, almost going through the form of paying idolatrous worship to a Siamese general and a midshipman of H.M.S. "Hyacinth." I then said, in the most serious and formal manner, "Tell the general that I have a message from my rajah!" and, added Jadee, "Remember, oh Jamboo! that these men are swine, and would never have been here but for us; explain that to these sons of burnt mothers!" Requesting Jamboo to do no such thing, and desiring Jadee to hold his tongue, my message was duly delivered.

"He says," said Jamboo, "that he is ready to hear. But, dear me, sir, this not Siamese fashion; nobody

can send a message to a great chief like this without a present; suppose no got present, can do no good!" "Never mind, Jamboo," I replied; "you fire away as I tell you. Tell this old gentleman that my captain wishes him to put the two bullocks he promised for the ship, on board my boat."

Jamboo collapsed; and I saw he was going to remonstrate at having to give such an unimportant message to so big a man, therefore checked it at once, by ordering him to do as he was told.

The message was delivered, and its effect was richly comical on the audience around us: they stared open-mouthed at the impertinence of the whole affair, though I knew perfectly well I had done right; for the devil a bullock should I have got from anyone but the chief, and to go off without two of them was not my intention. The chief seemed to divine my motive; for though he stared at first, he soon smiled, and with becoming dignity replied that he did not look after bullocks, but that we should have two.

"Will his Excellency be good enough to order one of these officers to go with me, and point them out? I asked through Jamboo. And, wonderful to relate! his Excellency did please to do so, and I put the gentleman under Jadee's especial care, and told him not to part from him until he had the two animals

safe in his own custody. Jadee went away with him, looking as if any breach of contract would cause the Siamese officer to join the hecatomb in the tank.

I was now retiring, when the small spyglass in my hand attracted the Siamese chief's attention; and on inquiring if it was a pistol, its proper use was explained to him, and very much delighted his Excellency was with a sight through the little Dollond; and children at a peep-show were never more excited than were his attendants in their desire to be allowed to look through it. I need hardly say that I was not over liberal in that respect to those who had given themselves airs, and I soon beat a retreat. The crowd and the heat made the Divan disagreeable amongst people with whom fresh water had become a scarce commodity.

The excessive self-conceit I observed amongst these officers is a national characteristic of the Siamese people: they style themselves, *par excellence*, "Thai," or freemen; the Franks, in short, of the great peninsula embraced by the Indian Ocean and China Sea—a title they most decidedly do not deserve as a body; for the *stick* is in more common use amongst them than the bamboo is with the Chinese, as an arbitrator between master and man.

Great numbers of their soldiery were in both fort and town, and struck me as being a fine soldierlike body of men if measured by an Asiatic standard, and minus pipeclay, black-ball, and leather stocks, I might also add, regimental clothing. A cloth round their hips, falling to the knee, and another fashioned like a Malay sarang, hanging across the shoulders, formed their sole attire. In appearance, they struck me as a composite race, and betrayed strong signs of a mixed origin. They were taller than the Malays, long-backed, and better developed about the legs and hips, as a race should be who live more ashore than afloat. The features partook of the Burmese cast of countenance, with the eye just enough Chinese in outline to show that the sons of Ham were numerous on the banks of the deep Menam. In colour, they were a shade or two darker than the Malay and Chinese, exhibiting in that respect an affinity to the races of the Peninsula of Indostan, and substantiating their sacred traditions, that their religion was derived, as well as their earliest civilisation, from the banks of the Ganges. The power of endurance of these soldiery I had often heard my Malays extol; and looking at the spare athletic limbs, in which there was more bone than flesh, I could easily understand that they were capable of making long marches; indeed,

whilst I stood at the gate, two men, clothed as I have before described, marched in with a spring in their gait which betokened that they had still plenty of work left in them; and on inquiring where they had come from, I was informed that they had marched from a place thirty miles distant. Beside their arms, these men each carried a slip of bamboo on his shoulder, at either extremity of which was suspended all their baggage, cooking-gear, and several days' rice tied up in a bag with a little salt. The celerity with which an army that thus carried its equipage and commissariat upon the men's shoulders, could move from point to point of an extensive empire like Siam, must be very remarkable, and fully supported the Malay acknowledgment of their being excellent soldiers.

All those I saw had firearms of some description or other: the majority had flint muskets with the Tower mark; round the waist of the soldiery was secured a primitive cartouche-box containing, in little movable reeds, the charges of powder, and in the same belt a bag was suspended filled with musket-balls and pieces of a felt-like vegetable substance for wads.

The martial appearance of these Siamese was heightened by a very peculiar mode of wearing the

hair. Naturally jet black, and somewhat harsh in texture, the hair was cut to an equal length all over the head, leaving it about three and a half inches long, the object being to make each particular hair to stand on end, "like quills upon the fretful porcupine," and to ensure this, a fillet, of an inch and a half wide, of rattan, or some stiff substance, carefully covered with white linen, encircled the head, passing across the forehead close to the roots of the hair, and served to force it all into an erect position.

It decidedly gave them a singularly fearless air, but, whether a national custom, or merely adopted by the Siamese general to make a marked distinction between his followers and the long-haired Malays, I am unable to say.

I passed Jadee and his crew of twenty men, engaged in getting the two bullocks on board the "Emerald," and they had had a pretty tough hour's work in doing so: for the animals, like most of the native cattle in Malayia, were only-half tamed buffalos—a set of savage long-horned brutes that will not turn from the tiger so common in those jungles. Indeed in many of the native states, the favourite sport of the chiefs is to capture a tiger alive, and turn him loose into an enclosed arena with a buffalo-bull, and in nine cases out of ten the latter will, in spite

of the fearful wounds it receives, kill the tiger with a blow or two of its horns, and then toss it about as an English bull would a dog.

We had some difficulty in lashing down our freight of fresh beef, and taking it safely off to the "Hyacinth;" and the commanding officer, the kind and gallant Airey, laughed immoderately when I told him of my mode of carrying out his injunction, "not to return without the bullocks." "A midshipman's impertinence must," as he observed, "have astonished the Rajah of Ligor!" for he it was, and no one less, that I had thus played the ambassador with!

Airey was the master of the "Hyacinth;" but owing to the death of the second lieutenant, and the promotion of the first lieutenant*, he was now doing commanding officer's duty. He was a charming specimen of a generous, gallant sailor. Poor fellow! he now lies in a humble grave on the pestilential shores of Labuan, having fallen a victim to fever and dysentery, so rife at the commencement of our settlement on that island. Heaven rest his soul! a better, kinder man, or more zealous officer, never

* The late Captain Giffard, who was mortally wounded, and his vessel, H.M.S. "Tiger," captured by the Russians off Odessa, in the commencement of the late war.

adorned our profession, although it never was his luck, in piping days of peace, to have sufficient opportunity for a display of his abilities, and the canker of disappointment and a worn-out constitution laid him under the turf.

Arrangements were now made to proceed northward, so as to promote the rapid reduction of the rest of the province, a great portion of which was still in the hands of the Tonkoos and their adherents. The Siamese, as I have said, did not appear to understand the value of our passive form of co-operation, though it was undoubtedly very efficacious; and Jamboo assured me he had, whilst in Quedah fort, heard many insulting inuendoes cast upon the British mode of blockading. "Oh! you have been eating white rice while we have starved upon black," was one of their expressions equivalent "to lying in clover" whilst they worked hard. Others wanted to know, "Why we allowed a set of Malay vermin to escape, that they might return, to harass the Siamese at a future day?" In short, had Captain Warren expected much gratitude for all his hard work and anxious days and nights, he would have been bitterly disappointed, and we may say that our unhandsome treatment by the Siamese was only of a piece with the conduct of some other countries which we could mention in more

civilised parts of the world, where policy, or generosity, or Quixotism has caused Old England to lavish her treasure and her still more precious blood.

It was with no small satisfaction that we saw the "Hyacinth" weigh on the 22nd of March, and proceed towards Parlis, leaving the Siamese and the "Teda Bagoose" to fulfil their mission, whatever that might be. By the bye, the fighting captain of the "Teda Bagoose" had vowed to report me officially for giving such a name to his Imperial Majesty's brig, and that added to my desire to see her a long way astern.

CHAP. XVII.

Return to Parlis. — A Case of Cholera-morbus. — An Irish Cure for Cholera. — Pat Conroy's Opinion of the Chinese. — Tamelan. — Parlis. — The Flight from Tamelan. — The Legacy of Queen Devi. — The Departure. — The Heart of a Cocoa-nut Tree. — Proceed to shoot a Buffalo. — Discover a Herd. — The Shot and the Chase. — Obtain Plenty of Buffalo Meat.

THE cutter and gun-boat proceeded along the shore, whilst the "Hyacinth" made a straight course; and the lack of wind in both cases caused the passage to Parlis to be longer than usual. Unable to continue at the oars and sweeps during the heat of the day, we anchored off Bamboo Point, whilst the "Hyacinth," in the distance, flapped lazily along with light airs and cats'-paws which never reached us. Towards sunset we weighed, and had not gone far before a small prahu was detected endeavouring to hide herself in the jungle: we of course made her come alongside; and a wretched sight she was! The crew on board consisted for the most part of Chinese settlers who were flying the province: they came

from Trang, and gave us the first intimation that that place was already in Siamese possession; but on the way down, cholera and fever had broken out in the prahu, and many had died.

Whilst with us, one poor creature was seized with Asiatic cholera. It was a sad sight, to see one in a sound healthy state suddenly seized with a mortal malady. After one or two rapidly successive cramps the very appearance of the man seemed to alter; he became livid and looked collapsed. We had no medicine, and beyond rubbing his cramped muscles, could do nothing, until Barclay's stroke oarsman, a fine specimen of "a boy" from Kinsale, called Paddy Conroy, said it was "a pithy to say a hathen dhoi in such a manner," and volunteered to cure him, if the officers would only give him five minutes' run of their spirits. Pat Conroy, we knew, looked on spirits — in a nate state, as he called it — as a sovereign remedy for every trouble flesh is heir to; and it was necessary to keep an eye to his physicking, as in his zeal he might have administered counteractives to himself, whilst doing the good Samaritan to the cholera-stricken Chinaman. We opened our private store of spirits, which was kept in a box containing our stock of cayenne pepper, salt, chilies, pickles, and chutney. "Be dad! sir," said Conroy, as his Milesian nose disappeared

in the smiles which wreathed his honest countenance, "here is the rale physic here; the devil a sowl dies of cholera while there is all this whisky to be had,"— and as he said so, he started a wine-glass of it into a tumbler. "And then there's the beauthiful Jamaicy rhum too,—by the mother of Moses! what is better than that too for cramps?" so saying, he added some of it. "Ah, now, sir, if you plaise, the smallest taste of gin; oh! it's wonderful what a power there is in that same, if so be there is plenty of it; not that Paddy Conroy would exchange Kinsale harbour full of it for a bucketful of the rale crathur—but what can these hathens know about it? Now for a spoonful of chili vinegar and a pinch of cayenne." So suiting the action to the word, he mixed up a diabolical potion, which would have horrified a horse-doctor.

I remonstrated, but Barclay truly enough said, it gave the Chinaman one chance more of surviving, and accordingly a seaman forced the poor creature's mouth open with an iron spoon-handle,—for the teeth were set close together with spasms,—and Dr. Conroy poured his cure for cholera down the man's throat.

"You have killed that man!" I said.

"The divil a fear, sir," replied Conroy; "good whisky never killed any man;" a rash assertion

of his faith in his national liquor, which seemed somewhat supported by the rapid improvement which took place in the patient, who had perfectly shaken off his malady before we reached Parlis.

Chinaman-like, the wretch seemed incapable of gratitude, and neither he nor his friend said, thank you! to Pat Conroy, who, when I remarked to him that I thought they might have done so, replied that "Nothing good ever came of men who wore tails, the dirty hathens! and it was almost a pithy to have wasted good liquor on such bastes."

Conroy was one of those light-hearted, devil-may-care Irishmen, *one or two* of whom are so invaluable on a man-of-war, just to keep up fun and light-heartedness; more than that is always a source of trouble, for they are seldom good sailors, and often troublesome and drunken. But wherever a good joke would lighten heavy work, or dispel monotony or care, such a diverting vagabond as Paddy Conroy was invaluable; and though Paddy was bad at steering or seamanship, he could handle a musket with all the innate love of soldiering of an Irishman, and where dash or pluck was required, "Paddy Conroy," to use his own expression, "would be all there, your honour!" His love for being "all there" eventually led him into a powder-magazine in China, where

firing a pistol at a retreating Tartar, he blew up the whole edifice, and himself with it. Paddy escaped with serious injury to his hands and ears, and a general shake of the constitution from which he has not yet recovered. I am, however, going ahead too fast, and must return to Parlis, where we made all our sister gun-boats extremely happy by the information we had to communicate of the fall of Quedah fort.

Little change had taken place in the state of affairs in the river since my last visit; but the difficulty of maintaining the blockade was not small, in consequence of the extraordinary distance we had to send for fresh water. In proof of this, I was next day despatched to Tamelan, to fill all the water-casks of the flotilla from the water-holes of that village.

The good little Queen Devi was most anxious to assist me, and gave every gallon of water she could spare; but her villagers were themselves somewhat straitened for supplies, there having only been a couple of showers of rain during the last two months; and the parched earth gaped everywhere in wide fissures, and looked as if longing for that rainy season which was not then far distant. Already had parties of her people been obliged to forage up the

stream for fresh water, and been fired at by what they described as "*orang-jahat,*" or bad people—evidently a sort of banditti, which, called into existence by the hostilities in the province, waged war alike on either side. The news we brought the good folks of Tamelan of the fall of Quedah and Trang, decided the chieftainess upon taking a step for which it was evident she had some time made preparations. She therefore waited upon me next morning, and informed me that her people intended embarking all their movable property in their prahus, and to proceed to a more secure spot within the jurisdiction of the English Government. I tried hard to persuade her to remain, and that I was sure Captain Warren would explain to the Siamese how neutral her conduct had been, and would secure good terms for herself and followers, provided they submitted willingly to the new order of things.

She assured me, however, that it was hopeless to expect that the Siamese soldiery would obey their chiefs in showing any forbearance to the Malay inhabitants, and that if I refused her leave to depart, or she attempted to prevent her people doing so, they would assuredly disperse into the neighbouring jungle, and escape as they best could from the sea-shore. Under these circumstances, I wished them God-speed, and

promised her a safe conduct to the ship, whence I knew she would be allowed to proceed to Penang.

All the day was spent in hasty preparation; the more so, that two or three fugitives from the upper part of the Setouè arrived with some horrid tale of atrocities committed by the invaders. Children and women were staggering under loads of household goods; weeping and squalling going on on all sides; and many of the prahus in which they were embarking were so leaky that the people were already baling. One could only think with a shudder, as visions of blue sharks and alligators floated before the imagination, what it would be when on the high seas. Queen Devi, poor soul! cried bitterly all day, and told me of some old hereditary right she had to the land hereabouts; that some eighteen or twenty years before, the wrath of the Emperor of Siam had fallen with a fiftyfold greater force upon the Quedah Malays, because it was less expected than at present; and that her family had been fugitives from that time until she had returned in the previous autumn, hoping to live quietly in the land of her birth — a hope which, of course, had now proved to be fallacious.

As nearly all her best men had gone with their countrymen into the interior to fight in defence of

their rights, there was a sad want of hands to perform the necessary manual labour for the equipment of their prahus. I therefore ordered my crew to lend a hand in getting the sails, oars, and rudders of their vessels into order for their voyage. The gratitude of the poor souls for this piece of assistance knew no bounds; and the chieftainess, in return, told me that she gave me a legacy of all the cocoa-nut trees and mangoes in the village, and informed me that there were a number of half-wild buffaloes in the clearance, which we might shoot and eat if we liked to do so.

In consequence of this information, I determined to wait and secure such a treat for my poor crew, who had not tasted a morsel of animal food during the four months I had been with them; and for how much longer previously, they alone knew. During the night and morning the chieftainess and her followers left, in ten prahus, laden as deep as they would swim, and crammed like slavers with human beings. We gave them a parting cheer, and soon afterwards landed, to see what was to be picked up in the shape of food. Our search was not successful, and even fruit was scarce upon the cocoa-nut trees. My crew, however, soon struck upon a method of obtaining something to eat, in

the shape of the heart of a cocoa-nut tree. This luxury could only have been enjoyed under the peculiar circumstances through which the trees had become our property, for they had to be cut down; and then, on splitting open the gorgeous crown of leaves which forms the capital of that useful species of palm, a white vegetable substance was obtained, about three feet long and as thick as a woman's arm. Eaten raw, it tasted like a delicious nut, and when boiled it formed an excellent vegetable.

The vandalism of destroying a noble tree for the sake of one dish of fruit or vegetable was, however, too great to be carried to any extent. I only allowed three or four to be cut down, and consoled the men by assuring them of beef *ad lib.* in the evening.

Jadee reconnoitred the rice-fields for the bullocks or buffaloes, and reported to me that during the heat of the day they had naturally retreated into the shady depths of the jungle, and would only come out to feed in the clearings when the sun declined from the zenith. We therefore went on board to burnish up our arms, and get some salt ready for curing our anticipated surplus of beef. I found Jamboo anxious to proceed up the river, to procure from a certain bank a peculiar species of very delicious shellfish, which I never have tasted anywhere but in

the Setouè, although it is, I believe, common to the Straits of Malacca. I gave him permission, warning him to retreat immediately should war parties of Siamese or the orang-jahat fire upon him—an injunction which I believe I might have well spared myself the trouble of giving to the unwarlike descendant of the British Mars. About three o'clock Jadee and I started for our foray against the buffaloes, with a single barrel each, and two active men as beaters. As we went along, Jadee explained to me that the animals were perfectly wild, and all that the Malays knew of them in Tamelan was, that their young rice-fields had been sadly ravaged by them, and that we should have to be, in the first place, very 'cute to get within shot of them; and in the next, it would require some generalship, if we hit them in the open ground, to escape their wrath; for, as he sagely observed, "They don't care about tigers or snakes; and a very wise man who I once knew, who understood all the buffaloes say to one another, told me that they don't care for a man either."

"All right!" I said to Jadee; "but don't you know of any charm for getting near them, or, if we get near them, for being sure of killing them?"—Nothing, I knew, pleased Jadee so much as appealing to his powers of necromancy.

"Well, Tuhan," he replied, "I do know an infallible charm for bringing down man or animal; and that is, putting a small piece of pork-flesh (here he spat, and cursed the unclean animal) down a gun-barrel. I intend to practise it on Mahomet Alee; but, Inshallah! we will get these buffaloes without."

"God is great!" I reverentially replied; "and it is lucky we are able to do without the flesh of swine on this occasion; but if it is a charm, may it be plentiful, oh, Jadee! when you meet the pirate Mahomet Alee!"

Thus chatting, we strolled rapidly along, skirting the western edge of the jungle, so that the strong shadow might in some measure serve to conceal us, and to keep to leeward of every animal in the cleared ground, the wind being from the eastward. At last the quick eyes of the Malays detected four or five animals feeding in a hollow; and we commenced to stalk them up as if they had been red deer. Aided by the wind and shadow, we at last reached a small knoll unobserved; and there, through a mass of brushwood, had a good view of the brutes, and were well within range of them. Jadee peered over, and whispered that we were in a bad place, but no better could be had. There was a fine tree lying on its broadside not far off; its branches would have

given a cover against any charge, for it formed a natural "abattis;" but it was impossible to get there without being seen by the cattle, who would either charge us, or bolt immediately. I therefore arranged that our two beaters should at once fall back again into the jungle, out of which we had advanced some four hundred yards. When they were safe, Jadee and I were to single out a bull and fire, then run for the fallen tree, to obtain shelter before the rest of the herd were upon us. We accordingly carried this into execution, levelling our muskets at a great black bull buffalo, who was on the look-out whilst the rest fed. Something alarmed the brute: he evidently caught sight of the beaters retiring to the jungle, and, as if by magic, seemed to communicate an alarm to the herd, which contained not more than four or five cows with calves and another bull. Seeing by his vicious look that he was going to charge my men, I sang out "Fire!" Both our barrels went off together, and down dropped the look-out bull. I was so enchanted that I looked only at him. "Lari-lacasse!" screamed Jadee, suiting the action to the word, by starting on his legs and running as fast as he could for the fallen tree. It required no repetition of the admonition for me to follow suit, and the more so as one glance showed me the other bull was in chase.

The fifty yards I had to go over were done like lightning, and I leapt the stem and dashed after Jadee amongst the branches as the brute crashed against them. After trotting briskly round to see if there was an opening, it pawed the earth fiercely; and taking another volley from us, of which one ball alone wounded it, the bull beat a retreat, at which I was not sorry, for a more spiteful-looking beast than an enraged buffalo, I do not suppose the whole range of the animal kingdom can produce.

It has none of that beauty of form which strikes one in looking at a European bull. Its black smooth skin is thinly covered with hair, not unlike that of an English pig; its frame is long, bony, and rather angular; the feet or hoofs clumsy and massive; the head long, with an appearance of cunning ferocity about the eye, very unlike the fearless look of our British bull. The horns are long and sharp, thick as a man's arm close to the head, and forming so open a curve that they can be laid almost close back in the hollow of the shoulder; and their efficiency I was very ready to believe in, without further proof than Jadee's assurance. We now left our fortress and joined the beaters, who told us that the wounded bull had retreated into the jungle, but was bleeding too profusely to go far; we followed

up his trail, and soon found him in the centre of a thicket. After some trouble we dislodged him and administered the *coup de grâce*, much to our delight, for neither Jadee nor I were sportsmen in the proper acceptance of the word; and as we cheered over our trophy, I own to the soft impeachment of allowing my mind to recur to beefsteaks and marrow-bones, to which my rice-famished palate had been long a stranger. Ripping open the bull, we cut off as much meat as we could shoulder, and proceeded to the "Emerald," to send all hands up for the rest of the carcase.

CHAP. XVIII.

Jamboo frightened by a River Spirit. — The Aborigines of Malayia. — Malayan Superstitions. — An "Untoo," or Spirit, seen. — My Credulity taxed. — The Spirits of the Jungle. — On Superstitions in general. — The Charms of Superstition. — Musquitoes and Sand-flies. — The Village on Fire. — Flaming Cocoa-nut Trees. — Intentional Destruction. — Traces of Man rapidly obliterated in the East.

THE men soon brought off all the meat from the dead buffalo, and as there was much more than we could eat at once, the surplus was cut into thin shreds and hung up about the vessel, so that on the morrow the action of the sun should convert it into what, in South America, is styled "charqui," or dried beef.

Towards sunset, the sampan returned down the river with only half a load of shell-fish, Jamboo and his crew having been frightened off the fishing-ground by what Sutoo, the quarter-master, assured me was an Untoo, or evil spirit. He explained to me, that while busy up to their knees in water, an odd noise had been heard under the over-

hanging trees on the opposite bank: looking in that direction, they saw a man's head come up out of the water; the face was covered with hair, and it eyed them in a fierce, threatening manner; they shouted, jumped into the sampan, and fired at the creature; it dived for a minute, and then appeared again, grinning horribly. Jamboo and his men decided that it was a demon, and thought it better to decamp whilst their skins were whole. I laughed heartily at their fears, and tried to explain to them that it might be a seal. Jamboo, however, stoutly insisted that no seals were ever seen in Malayia; and as I found myself in the minority, I quietly acquiesced in the supposition that it was an unclean spirit. Jadee said, if not the Old Gentleman, that it must be one of the wild men who could imitate the appearance of monkeys or apes, the cry of birds, or the howlings of wild beasts, so as even to deceive animals.

These wild men are the sad remnants of an aboriginal race of diminutive negroes, who, at one time, were more numerous, but are now only found in small isolated parties, in the most inaccessible fastnesses of Malayia, living amongst the branches of trees, to avoid the snakes and beasts of prey. They are human beings in their most degraded form—without religion, without any acknowledged form of

government, and only gifted with animal instincts and passions. When found or caught by the Malays, they are tied up or caged just as we should treat chimpanzees.

I argued that it was very unlikely such creatures should be down so close to the sea, and, least of all, would they voluntarily show themselves to our men. Jadee, however, suggested that the movements of large bodies of armed men had disturbed them in their haunts; besides, that at one season of the year they were known to wander towards the sea-shore, either for the sake of procuring salt, or because shell-fish was easily procurable. Under these circumstances, I was not sorry Jamboo had returned; for these wild men use the sumpit, or blow-pipe, with fearful skill, and blow small poisoned arrows, a few inches long, with sufficient force to destroy even birds upon the wing.

Sailors of every part of the world have a strong spice of the romantic and superstitious in their composition, and the Malays are decidedly no exception to the rule. Indeed, the wild and enterprising life the majority of them lead, and the many curious phenomena peculiar to the seas and islands of their beautiful archipelago, could never be accounted for by an uneducated but observant and highly imaginative

race, by any other than supernatural agency. Often, during the evenings of the blockade, had Jamboo recounted to me strange tales of Malayian history: in all of them fiction and myth were deliciously blended with truth, and facts could be easily appealed to in corroboration of all he recounted. The natural and supernatural, the miracles of the Romish church, Hindoo mythology, and Mahometan fables were rolled one into the other, making tales of thrilling interest, which I cared not to unravel even had I been able to do so.

There were proofs by the thousand amongst these poor fellows of that connection with the world of spirits which it seems to be the desire of man in every stage of civilisation to assure himself of; and I must say, I half began to believe in their assertions upon that head; their faith was so earnest and child-like, that it worked strongly upon even my own tutored convictions to the contrary. Children never clustered round a winter fire at home with more intense credulity and anxious sympathy, than did my poor Malays to listen to some woful legend, derived from the blood-stained annals of the Portuguese or Dutch rule in Malayia and its islands. As an instance of their childlike belief in spirits, and of the strange way in which such an idea is sup-

ported by optical delusions common to these latitudes, I may here recount an event which no more than amused me at the time, although the strange way in which Jamboo and his men swore to having this day seen an "Untoo" brought it back forcibly to my mind.

Just after the blockade commenced, in December of the previous year, my gun-boat was lying one night close to the southern point of Quedah river. The mist fell for awhile like small rain upon us, but afterwards, at about ten o'clock, changed into fine weather, with heavy murky clouds overhead, through the intervals of which we had momentary gleams of light from a young moon. The air was cold and damp, and I naturally sought shelter under my tent-shaped mat, although until midnight I considered myself responsible for a vigilant look-out being kept. About eleven o'clock, my attention was called to the look-out man, who, seated upon the bow-gun, was spitting violently, and uttering some expressions as if in reproof or defiance, and continued to do so very frequently. Ignorant at that time of the character of my crew, such a peculiar proceeding made me restless. Presently I saw another man go up to him; he pointed in the direction of the jungle, and both repeated the conduct which had attracted my

attention: the second man then walked below, as if glad to get off deck. Fairly puzzled, I walked forward. The look-out man had got his back turned to the jungle, but was every now and then casting glances over his shoulder in a very furtive manner, and muttering sentences in which Allah was invoked very earnestly. He seemed glad to see me, and jumped up to salute me.

"Anything new?" I asked. "Prahus?"

"Teda, Touhan; No, sir!" was the answer; and then seeing me looking towards the jungle, he made signs with his head that it was better to look elsewhere.

I immediately called Jamboo, the interpreter, and desired him to ask what the Malay saw in the jungle.

Jamboo, as usual, sat down, black-fellow fashion, on his hams, and, half asleep, drawled out my question, and then coolly said —

"He says he saw a spirit, sir."

"Nonsense!" I replied. "Ask him how? or where? It may be some Malay scouts."

Again Jamboo made an effort, and the oracle informed me, that the man had distinctly seen an Untoo, or spirit, moving about among the trees close to the water's edge: he assured me he had seen it ever

since the mist cleared off, and that he had been praying and expectorating, to prevent it approaching the gun-boat, as it was a very bad sort of spirit, very dangerous, and robed in a long dress.

I expostulated with Jamboo for repeating such a nonsensical tale, and said, "Explain to the man it is impossible; and that, if anything, it must be an animal, or a man.

Jamboo, however, assured me, very earnestly, that Malays often saw "Untoos;" that they were some of them dangerous, some harmless; and that if I looked, the Malay said, I could see it as well as himself.

I accordingly sat down by the man, and looked intently in the same direction. We were about one hundred and fifty yards off the jungle; the water was just up to its edge; among the roots of trees, and for a few yards in, there were small ridges of white shingle and broken shells, which receded into darkness, or shone out in distinct relief as the moonlight struck upon them.

When these patches of white shone out, I pointed immediately, and asked if that was what he saw.

"No, no!" said the Malay; and Jamboo added, "He says he will tell you when he sees it."

Suddenly he touched me, and pointing earnestly, exclaimed, "Look! look!"

I did so, and an odd tremor, I am not ashamed to say, ran through my frame, as I caught sight of what looked like the figure of a female with drapery thrown around her, as worn by Hindoo women: it moved out from the shade of the forest, and halted at one of the hillocks of white sand, not more than 300 yards distant. I rubbed my eyes! whilst the interpreter called on a Romish saint, and the Malay spat vigorously, as if an unclean animal had crossed his path. Again I looked, and again I saw the same form: it had passed a dark patch, and was slowly crossing another opening in the forest.

Feeling the folly of yielding to the impression of reality which the illusion was certainly creating on my mind, I walked away, and kept the Malay employed in different ways until midnight: he, however, every now and then spat vehemently, and cursed all evil spirits with true Mahometan fervour.

In the middle-watch the "Untoo" was again seen, but as it did not board us,—as Jadee assured me "Untoos" of a wicked description had been known to do,—I conjectured it was some good fairy, and at any rate we were not again troubled with an Untoo

until it appeared to the fishing party in the Setouè river.

These spectral illusions are not peculiar to the jungles of Malayia; there is no part of the world where they do not exist in some form or other; and I, for my part, am not desirous of robbing them of their mystery: there is a poetry, a romance, about them which invests with awe or interest some wild spot or lonely scene that otherwise would be unheeded.

The phantom-ship which will not furl her royals to the storms of the Cape of Good Hope, and astonishes the tempest-tossed seaman as she glimmers amidst the clouds, sea, and mist of the great Southern Ocean, is too charming a spirit for us to be easily robbed of; nay, where is the sailor who has long sailed in those seas, and not seen her! The spirit of the old pirate is still observed, in stormy nights when the sea-bird cannot even keep the sea, to row his tiny skiff through the combing waves, visiting his hidden treasures in Nantucket bay. Among the sunburnt reefs and on the lonely mangrove-covered isles of the West Indies and Gulf of Mexico, the restless bodies of the buccaneers of old are still seen to haunt the scenes of their former crimes. The broken-spirited Peruvian and the degenerate

Spaniard attest that on the lofty table-lands of the Bolivian Andes, east of Lake Titicaca, the phantom forms of her departed kings still march by night, and watch over the vast treasures that they there concealed from the avarice of their conquerors. These are a few of the many examples which might be adduced of a general belief in the supernatural, of a belief in the connection between this gross earth and the world of spirits, whether bad or blessed. I care not to explain them away; for there is far more pleasure than fear in the very possibility that such things may be.

Cold philosophy and the sceptic's science may build up walls of impossibilities, and steel our hearts to the belief that those who have laboured for good or evil upon earth shall return no more to encourage or to warn us in our wayfaring here. Who will believe them, but those that are of them? Rather let us rejoice that, even if it be an infirmity of imaginative minds, we are blest in believing that "the beloved and true-hearted come to visit us once more."

"Mortal," they softly say,
"Peace to thy heart!
We, too, yes, Mortal,
Have been as thou art;

Hope-lifted, doubt-depressed
Seeing in part;
Tried, troubled, tempted,
Sustained, as thou art."

* * * * * *

The closing shades of night brought off from the adjacent jungle such clouds of musquitoes and sand-flies, that we, at any rate, were soon recalled from dreams of spirits and "Untoos," to the vile realities of mother earth. The crew lighted pans of cocoa-nut husks, and set them along the windward side of the vessel, so that we were enveloped in a pungent smoke which threatened to bring on ophthalmia; but still I was a thin-skinned treat the wretches had not perhaps ever before partaken of: they pierced through my light cotton garments, and I felt morally certain Jadee would only discover the husk of a midshipman by the morning, as all that was succulent was fast being abstracted. I had promised to wait until the morrow, for the purpose of shooting some peacocks which had been seen, but my resolution failed me, and I determined to start at once if the night-breeze, which was fast freshening, did not mend matters. My attention was, however, soon attracted to a more important object. The land-breeze, as usual, came

GUN BOAT ESCAPING FROM BURNING JUNGLE

with a smart gust, and almost simultaneously the deserted village burst into flames in two or three places. We went immediately to quarters, and prepared for an attack, fancying, from the sudden way in which the fire commenced, that it was the act of some of the banditti of whom the chieftainess had warned me.

The flames spread with awful rapidity: everything was well calculated to promote ignition—houses, grass, leaves were as dry as three months of a broiling sun could make them; in fifteen minutes, one broad wave of fire had enveloped the whole village, and being to windward of the gun-boat, we had to get the night awnings down, and drop the vessel very expeditiously out of the way. This done, I landed two parties of men, ten in number each; one party to try and stay the fire, the other, armed, to resist any of the "Orang-jahat," if they were about.

Sad as the scene was at first, it became truly terrible when the flames extended themselves to the tops of the cocoa-nut trees!— the felt-like substance between the roots of the leaves, as well as the leaves themselves, catching fire, and communicating from one to the other, until the whole plantation resembled a row of gigantic torches flaming and waving in the

air. We were of course unable to make any further attempt to stay the conflagration, and some had narrow escapes of their lives from the fierce rapidity with which the fire leapt from one object to the other, and licked up with its fiery tongue everything as it went.

No natives nor Siamese were to be seen in any direction; and I afterwards pretty correctly ascertained the origin of the fire. Under every one of the houses, which, as usual, were raised some three feet from the earth, the natives of Tamelan had been in the habit of throwing the husks of the rice used daily in their families, forming, on the day they left, very moderate-sized heaps, and when they departed, the embers from their hearths had been thrown on those heaps of husks. So long as it was calm, the ignited husks of rice had merely smouldered, but directly the breeze sprang up, they were fanned into flames, and in a few minutes, as I have described, wrapt the whole village in a sheet of fire.

The people of Tamelan had evidently determined that their conquerors should not dwell in the houses their industry had constructed; and my Malays seconded them, by not pointing out to me the conse-

quence likely to arise from leaving the smouldering fires in the deserted village. Next day, the sun rose on a row of calcined trees, and a patch of burnt fragments. Tamelan no longer existed, and the next monsoon, with its rains, would hand over to the dominion of the jungle the very spot on which it stood. The footsteps of man are readily obliterated by the rapid growth of Eastern vegetation: its action is to be compared to nothing but that of the ocean, which bears but the impress of the stamp of the steamship for a minute, and then laughs and rolls on, scorning the pigmy that has crossed its surface. So the green forests of these lands of rank vegetation close in and wave over race after race of men, who battle with it for awhile, and pass away, leaving no more traces of their existence in the perishable records of this earth, than does the keel of the ship over the surface of the waters.

In the forests of Malayia, the traveller already finds remains of temples and inscriptions, hidden in creepers, vines, and jungle-grass: they have not even a tradition attached to them, and the best-read Eastern historian cannot decide whether the once great kingdom of Pegu extended its boundaries thus far, or whether these ruins are those of some ancient

Malay nation, which held a sway in this peninsula before a pressure from the north forced them to push throughout the archipelago, nay, even Polynesia, for a resting-place, extinguishing, in their character of conquerors, the negro race which undoubtedly was the aboriginal one of those islands.

CHAP. XIX.

A Crew of wretched Fugitives. — "Orang-laut," or Sea Gipsies. — Low Civilisation of the "Orang-laut." — Total Absence of all Religious Feeling. — Their Mode of Living. — The personal Appearance of Orang-laut. — Dearth of fresh Water. — Ordered to procure Water up the River. — Parlis and Pirate Fleet. — Interview with Haggi Loŭng. — Permission granted to procure Water. — Tom West's Address to the Malays. — Paddle up the River. — Tropical Malayan Scenery. — Pass Kanah. — Obtain fresh Water.

LET us return, however, to Tamelan. I filled my water-casks with all the water that was procurable, and started out of the river. When crossing Setouè Bay a prahu was seen coasting along the edge of the jungle, and after a short chase we caught her. The people in her were devoid of the usual Malay clothing, and in a most abject condition; they described themselves as Orang-Patani, or people of Patani (a Malayu-Siamese province on the opposite coast), and said they were flying before the Siamese army.

My Malays owned they were countrymen, but

spoke of them as barbarians of the lowest caste, pariahs of Malayia, and summed them up by the title of Bad People, or Gipsies, who make war alike by petty theft upon Malays or Siamese.

The specimens before us were decidedly very objectionable in every way: they were dirty to a degree, with a most villanous expression of countenance. After their first fear wore off, the women exhibited a most shameless want of modesty, and the men evinced a total absence of all jealous feeling for their wives or regard for their children; and yet, when one poor wretch offered me his two children for a half-bushel measure of rice, I could not help thinking their vices were the result of their sad, sad load of want and misery; and, giving them rice without taking their unfortunate offspring, we sent them on their way rejoicing.

These fugitives I believe to be identical with the Orang-laut, or Men of the Sea, spoken of by the earliest as well as modern writers when describing the different Malay races. Their proper home is in prahus, or canoes, although some of them occasionally settle upon the borders of the sea. Like the sons of Ishmael, their hand is against every man, and every man's hand against them. The Malay of more civilised communities holds them in contempt; and

he is the only man who can be expected to have any sympathies with them. They are found haunting in small groups — for their numbers do not entitle them to the appellation of tribes — the neighbourhood of our flourishing colonies, as well as the most secluded and barren places in Malayia. They are usually found east of the Straits of Malacca, although, as I have just shown, they reach the western side sometimes. Under fifty different names, they are known to the inhabitants of Siam, Java, Sumatra, Borneo, and the Moluccas, and in all cases bear a bad reputation.

The best description of them is given by a Mr. Thomson, a gentleman who has written on the archipelago. I take the liberty of transcribing it entire, and can testify to the truth of the account, in so far as they came under my own observation.

"This tribe takes its name, Salatar, from a creek in the island of Singapore, on the narrow strait which divides it from the mainland, not above eight miles distant from that flourishing and civilised British emporium. Its numbers are about 200, living in forty boats or canoes; and their range in quest of subsistence does not exceed thirty square miles. Their language is the Malayan, and considerable pains were taken to elicit any words foreign to that

language, but without success. As a proof of their possessing the same language as the Malays, I may mention that the children were heard, when playing, to converse in this language, and were perfectly understood by the Malays amongst our crew.

" They are possessed of no weapons, either offensive or defensive. Their minds do not find a higher range than necessity compels: the satisfying of hunger is their only pursuit. Of water they have abundance without search. With the sârkab, or fish-spear, and the parang, or chopper, as their only implements, they eke out a miserable subsistence from the stores of the rivers and forests. They neither dig nor plant, and yet live nearly independent of their fellow-men; for to them, the staple of life in the East, rice, is a luxury. Tobacco they procure by the barter of fish, and a few marketables collected from the forests and coral reefs. Of esculent roots, they have the prioh and kalana, both bulbous, and not unlike coarse yams. Of fruits, they eat the tampii, kledang, and buroh, when they come in season; and of animals, they hunt the wild hog, but refrain from snakes, ignanas, and monkeys.

" On their manners and customs I must need be short, as only long acquaintance with their prejudices and domestic feelings could afford a clue to the im-

pulse of their actions. Of a Creator they have not the slightest comprehension, a fact so difficult to believe, when we find that the most degraded of the human race, in other quarters of the globe, have an intuitive idea of this unerring and primary truth imprinted on their minds, that I took the greatest care to find a slight image of the Deity within the chaos of their thoughts, however degraded such might be, but was disappointed. They knew neither the God nor the devil of the Christians or Mahometans, although they confessed they had been told of such; nor any of the demi-gods of Hindoo mythology, many of whom were recounted to them.

"In the three great epochs of their individual life, we consequently found no rites nor ceremonies enacted. At birth, the child is only welcomed to the world by the mother's joy: at marriage, a mouthful of tobacco and one chupah (gallon) handed to one another confirm the hymeneal tie: at death, the deceased are wrapped in their garments, and committed to the parent earth, 'The women weep a little, and then leave the spot,' were the words of our simple narrator. Of pâris, dewas, mâmbangs, and other light spirits that haunt each mountain, rock, and tree, in the Malayan imagination, they did not know the names, nor had they anything to be afraid of, as

they themselves said, than 'the pirates of Galang, who are men like themselves.' With this I was forced to be contented, and teased them no more on the subject.

"They do not practise circumcision, nor any other Mohammedan rite. Their women intermarry with the Malays not unfrequently: they also give their women to the Chinese; and an old woman told us of her having been united to individuals of both nations at an early period of her life. Their tribe, though confining its range within the limits of thirty square miles, may still be considered of a very wandering kind. In their sampans (canoes), barely sufficient to float their loads, they skirt the mangroves, collecting their food from the shores and forests as they proceed, exhausting one spot and then searching for another. To one accustomed to the comforts and artificial wants of civilised life, theirs, as a contrast, appears to be extreme. Huddled up in a small boat hardly measuring twenty feet in length, they find all the domestic comforts they are in want of. At one end is seen the fireplace; in the middle are the few utensils they may be in possession of, and at the other end, beneath a mat not exceeding six feet in length, is found the sleeping apartment of a family often counting five

or six, together with a cat and a dog. Under this they find shelter from the dews and rains of the night and heat of the day. Even the Malays, in pointing out these stinted quarters, cried out, 'How miserable!' But of this the objects of their commiseration were not aware. In these canoes they have enough for all their wants.

"Their children sport on the shore in search of shell-fish at low water; and, during high water, they may be seen climbing the mangrove branches, and dashing from thence into the water with all the life and energy of children of a colder clime, at once affording us proof that even they have their joys.

"The personal appearance of these people is unprepossessing, and their deportment lazy and slovenly, united to much filthiness of person. The middle portion of the body of men and women is generally covered by a coarse wrapper made from the bark of the trap tree (a species of Atrocarpus), which extends from the navel to the knee. The women affected a slight degree of modesty at first approach, which soon gave way. The locks of the men are bound up with a tie of cloth, and sometimes by the Malay sapu-tangan (kerchief); those of the women fall in wild luxuriance over their face and shoulders.

Their children go entirely naked until the age of puberty."

That I should return empty handed to Parlis, in so far as a large supply of water was concerned, gave great cause of uneasiness to the officer in charge of the blockading flotilla; for it was self-evident that, without water, it would be utterly impossible for us to maintain a rigid blockade, and just now it became highly important to the safety and success of our allies that we should do so. Mr. Drake*, the senior mate, sent me off immediately to tell Captain Warren, who was then in the "Hyacinth," watching the channel which exists between the Lancavas islands and Parlis, and to beg a little water from him. The ship was, however, running short, and Captain Warren was determined not to be foiled, by having to quit his post at such an important moment for water. He therefore desired me to tell Mr. Drake that we must not come again to the ship for water; it must be foraged for, and that water must *be taken* if it could not be obtained in any other manner.

One of the other gun-boats was despatched to seek water elsewhere, and I was ordered to start next

* The present Commander Thomas G. Drake, R.N.

morning in a large sampan, with a couple of empty casks, to procure fresh water above the reach of the tide in Parlis river. My perfect confidence in the Malays, in spite of Mahomet Alee's threats, enabled me to look forward to my cruise into the very heart of their territory without any feeling but that of great curiosity, and a pardonable degree of pride at being the first to see all the war-prahus.

Early in the forenoon I started, in a good sampan, with one English sailor, an interpreter, and six picked Malays, all well armed; but their muskets and pistols were placed where they would be ready for use without attracting attention. The flood-tide ran strong, and we swept with it rapidly up the stream; the first mile or two was very monotonous, the banks being for the most part mangrove, and another tree which seems to delight in an equally amphibious life. At a curve in the river we came suddenly on a stockade, and, being hailed immediately by some men on guard, I felt to what a thorough test we were going to put Malay chivalry.

The stockade across the stream was well and neatly constructed, having a couple of tidal booms fitted in such a way that the guard could at any

moment, during either flood or ebb tide, stop up the only passage; and on either hand, some hundred yards back from the river, rose conical-shaped hills, on whose summits formidable batteries, constructed of heavy timber, commanded the stream in every direction.

The pangleman, or officer, at the guard-house smiled when I told him I was going up the river for water, and said he had no objection to my proceeding to Parlis to ask for permission; but, as to obtaining it, he laughed, and said all would depend upon the humour I should find Datoo Mahomet Alee in. Another three miles of fine open forest replete with Oriental interest now occurred, and the country improved in appearance after we had passed a spur of picturesque hills, through which the river had forced its way. Our approach to Parlis town was proclaimed by a line of war-prahus moored to either bank. The rapidity of the current, as well as my anxiety to reach the fresh-water point of the river, gave us but a flying glance at this much-talked-of and long-wished-for pirate fleet; and, besides which, I felt it desirable not to appear as if on a reconnoitring expedition.

They were handsome-looking craft, not very nu-

merous, but with fine long guns mounted in their bows: they had but few men in each of them, though otherwise ready for sea.

Of Parlis we could not see much beyond that it was situated upon a plain on the south side of the river, and appeared capable of containing four or five thousand inhabitants. We pulled in for a light wharf constructed of bamboos, whereon an armed Malay had hailed to know what we wanted; and he, in reply to my answer that we wished to see the Datoo, said that was his house. I landed with two or three men, and, surrounded by a crowd of armed Malays, who hastened from all sides, was escorted to Haggi Loūng.

That worthy received me, and said that Datoo Mahomet Alee was absent with his men fighting the Siamese: but what might be my errand?

I told him I was sent by my senior officer for water.

The Haggi laughed heartily for so holy a man, and having, much to my disgust, recalled to my unwilling recollection the visit he made me on a former occasion, asked how Mr. Barclay and Mr. Stewart were?

Bother the fellow's memory! I thought: he will

next remember Jadee, and then, maybe, his aubsive opinion of Mahomet Alee's mother. The Haggi was inclined to be satirical, and asked if it was the custom of "white men" to cut off salt and powder from their enemies, and then to go to them for water?

I said I did not know; but that I supposed my senior officer had been given to believe no difficulty would be made, or otherwise I should not, assuredly, have been sent. And then I pointed to the tide, and asked him not to detain me, for I wanted to return with my load of water upon the ebb.

The Haggi with good humour told me to go: he would not stop me, but warned me to be careful, as all the country was in arms, and neither he or Datoo Mahomet Alee could be responsible for our safety.

That was all I wanted: so I bowed, and started back to the boat. Numbers of armed Malays—some of them, from their beautiful creeses and spears, doubtless men of importance—thronged the Haggi's anteroom and the pier; a few of them scowled in an unfriendly manner, and some of the younger game-cocks ruffled up, as if anxious to throw a feather with my men. I kept an eye upon them, however, and got all safe down, without any farther

interchange of civilities than a short address, which my English bodyguard made them off the end of the pier.

Turning round upon the crowd, and eyeing them with a look which made those nearest to him back a little, as if wishing to increase the intervening distance, he said —

"Hah! you're mighty sarcy, you yellow-faced beggars; but just you come down, Jack, with your prahus to the mouth of this here river of your'n" (here my bodyguard performed a pantomime, pointing at their vessels), "and then, as sure as my name's Tom West, if we do not give you plenty to eat" (here he added the Malay for eating), "darn me, say I'm a Dutchman."

"Get in the boat, sir, immediately!" I shouted.

"Hi, hi!" said Tom West, as he jumped into the boat; "but I likes to give a set of sarcy beggars a bit of my mind, sir. — Lor' bless you!" continued he, smiling derisively at the young Malays who were crowing on the pier; "Lor' bless you! you are nice young men indeed! Please God and Lord Mount Edgecumbe, one of these days I'll have some of you by the *scruff* of the neck, and, if I don't give you a hug, say I never hailed from the west country!"

Tom West, like all sailors, evidently took it for granted they must understand English, or, if they did not, that they ought to do so; and, when I explained to him that it was folly speaking to people who could not comprehend a word he said, he replied, "Ah! sir, they are like their country monkeys; they never understands you until you thrashes them: give me a dozen shipmates with our pinnace's stretchers* in Parlis, and I'm blest if we would not soon make them understand English, and talk it too!"

Unprepared to dispute this theory, I allowed the subject to drop, and we soon swept out of sight of Parlis, the Malays in my crew striking up their usual paddle song, each in turn repeating a short verse in a high key, sentimental or witty, and the whole breaking into a chorus which ran somewhat thus —

Ah! ya-nō — nasī, nā no
Ah! yā nō!

and sounded very prettily, while the movements of

* A boat's stretcher is a piece of wood which goes across the bottom of a boat, to enable the rowers to throw a greater weight on their oars. It is a favourite weapon of offence with English boats' crews.

their bodies and stroke of their paddles kept time to the tune.

The scenery improved rapidly. We appeared to be approaching a range of hills which would bar our farther ascent, and I expected every moment to come to a fall or a rapid; instead of which we swept through another gapway in the hills, similar to the one where the stockade had been erected, and then we entered into the broad valley of Quedah; for in the far distance the lofty and picturesque peaks of the Malayan Ghauts stretched in a north and south direction, with nothing intervening. The forest was open, and, although the long drought had told somewhat on the leaves of the trees as well as the grass and underwood, the varied and mellowed tint of withered vegetation softened and added to the beautiful variety of the scene.

Birds were in places very numerous, and a species of pheasant ran along the banks of the river as if it was never fired at. Schools of monkeys and numerous alligators, with the glimpse of a couple of deer, showed what abundance of sport there was to be had. I had, however, too anxious a duty to perform to wait for shooting bird or beast, except in one instance, when I observed a large female alligator, with two young ones, not two feet long, lying by her, close to

the bank. Desirous of shooting the dam, so as to capture the *babies* alive, I fired and struck her, as I fancied, mortally, for she sprang half round, and there lay champing her teeth together in a savage manner, as if in agony. There were several other alligators about, and I proposed to the men in my boat to get out and chase them away, as I had often seen them do at the mouth of the river. But they would not hear of it, and assured me it was a very different thing to attack alligators that were accustomed to men, as these brutes were; besides which, fresh water always made them more savage and dangerous. Unwilling to be detained, I pushed on as hurriedly as possible; and when we had gone, by my calculation, a distance of sixteen miles from the entrance of the river, another town, called "Kangah," hove in sight.

Desirous of making the most of the favourable tide, I determined, at all risks, to visit Kangah on my way down; and except that a few children ran out and gazed upon us, our appearance attracted little curiosity. A mile or so above the town, we arrived opposite some powder-mills, where a Malay sentry hailed us, and having told him we had Haggi Loūng's permission to go for water, he did not detain us.

This fellow's confidence in his chief amused me. I asked him if Datoo Mahomet Alee was at Kangah.

"No," he replied, "he is on his march to Quedah!"

"How about the Siamese?" my interpreter asked.

"Pish!" said the sentinel; "the Siamese! they will all be destroyed!"

We did not wait for further information, and, shortly afterwards, finding the water perfectly fresh, we being then about eighteen miles from the sea, we laid on our paddles, and filled our casks, bathed, washed, and drank water, with all the *abandon* of men who had long been strangers to the luxury of fresh water in large quantities.

CHAP. XX.

The Ladies of Kangah bathing.—Halt to lunch at Kangah.—Kangah, its Situation.—Mode of constructing Malay Houses.—The Mosque.—The Bazaar and its Occupants.—Arrival of armed Men.—Return to the Boat.—Praiseworthy Fidelity of the Malays.—Malay Independence of Character.—The Pleasures of Memory.—A Malay Family Scene.—Return to Parlis.—Pulo Quetam.—Trade during Blockade.

Our casks filled, we turned our head down the stream and dropped down to Kangah, where I purposed having our noon-day meal, and waiting for the tide to have ebbed sufficiently to ensure us a rapid passage down to the gun-boats. At a point just above the town, where some lofty trees threw a pleasant shade half across the stream, all the female population of Kangah, as well as the children, were enjoying a bath. We passed through the scene of their enjoyment; and, to say the least of it, it was amazingly novel, and carried one back to the days of Captain Cook in a very abrupt manner. The married women had on dark-blue cotton dresses, but the

rest were in that cool attire which artists usually represent our first parents to have indulged in in Paradise. Gallantry compels me to allow that conscious innocence formed a very charming mantle to the young ladies. A contrary and depraved state was fully exemplified in Tom West, who actually blushed through his bronzed cheeks, and expressed his opinion with "Dang ye! you 're a rum lot. I wonder what my old mother would say, if she could only see ye. I wish Parson Hawker* was here!". My Malays, however, paddled through these water-nymphs, without uttering a word or making a gesture which could be construed into anything like disrespect. Whether this propriety arose from a proper and generous feeling at intruding upon the privacy of the women, or from a knowledge that any insult, real or imaginary, would be quickly resented by the ready creeses of the kinsmen of these ladies, I know not; but whatever the motive, it was equally a source of gratification to myself, and the comparison I drew in my own mind as to what would have been the conduct, under similar circumstances, of six of

* Parson Hawker is an imaginary clergyman, who, the west-country sailors assert used to marry them, per force, to the Devonport lasses, and exact his fee in savings out of their naval rations — such as flour, pork, &c.

our own English seamen, was not in favour of the latter. Choosing a convenient part of the river bank opposite "Kangah," we made our sampan fast, and proceeded to cook rice for lunch. A moderate crowd collected to look at the white men, who were Tom West and myself; but they were civil, and behaved very differently from those of Parlis.

Some person in the town sent me down a basket of delicious mangoes, and others lent us some mats to shield ourselves from the rays of the sun, which poured down with equatorial fierceness upon our exposed boat. All the inhabitants were most anxious to know how they would be treated by our blockading force, if obliged to fly before the Siamese; and it was very evident, the description my Malays gave them of our kindness to those who fled from Quedah and Tamelan made a favourable impression.

Kangah stands on the north bank of the Parlis river, and, like other towns in this country, has only just enough clear ground round it, to afford room for the growth of such rice, fruit, and vegetables as were required for the consumption of the inhabitants—the unreclaimed jungle sweeping round the cultivated land and orchards in a great curve, whose radius might possibly be a mile and a half.

The houses were for the most part detached,

standing in little gardens, or amongst pretty clusters of cocoa-nut and Penang (or beetle-nut) palms, as well as many other trees peculiar to this country: not the least pleasing of these was the graceful bannana which overshadowed almost every abode, and its deliciously cold-looking dark-green leaf was very grateful to the sight.

It is almost impossible to convey a good idea of the beauty and neatness of abodes entirely constructed of wood, bamboo, and matting or leaves. Those of Kangah, although far above the river, were, according to the constant rule, built upon piles three to four feet high; possibly this might be a necessary measure for the rainy season, but at that time, when the earth was baked as hard as rock, it seemed an act of supererogation. They, however, were generally oblong in the ground-plan, having a gallery extending along each of the long sides, to which a primitive ladder gave access from the ground. The floor (for each house was only one story high) consisted of strips of bamboo, sufficiently strong to bear the weight, but giving a pleasant spring to the tread; over these bamboos, which were perhaps an inch apart, and kept so by a tranverse "*snaking*" of strips of ratan, neat mats were spread, their number, fineness, and beauty depending upon the

wealth of the owner and the skill of his women. The walls were constructed of cocoa-nut and other palm leaves, secured with such cunning and neatness as to be perfectly wind and water tight, and at the same time pleasing to the eye. The roofs were somewhat high and peaked, betokening heavy rains, and with broad, overhanging eaves, which added to the picturesque appearance of the buildings, and reminded me strongly of the "châlets" in Switzerland. In some cases the houses were divided into two or more apartments, and the balcony then served as a means of communication between one room and the other, besides being at all times the favourite lounge of the inhabitants. In the centre of the town a mosquelike building rose amongst the trees, and proved that, although the many pretty houses scattered about might be as evanescent as their fragile construction indicated, nevertheless, the site of Kangah had, both in Siamese as well as in Malay annals, been always considered that of a town.

Whilst the rice was cooking, I thought I might as well run up and see the town: a boy volunteered to show Jamboo and me the bazaar and Datoo Mahomet Alee's elephants, and we accordingly started with a couple of followers.

The bazaar consisted of one narrow street, running at right angles to the river. Each shop had a sloping and open front, well shielded from the heat of the sun, on which was displayed the thousand strong-smelling fruits and vegetables, the gaudy Manchester prints, glaring red and yellow handkerchiefs, pretty mats and neat kagangs, piles of rice and tubs of ghee, handsome creeses, and formidable swords or choppers, which may be seen in all bazaars of Singapore, Malacca, or Penang. There were Mahometan natives of the Madras Presidency, swathed in turbans and robes of calico—the embodied forms of the Great Moguls which figure on our playing-cards; greasy, black, and very strong-smelling Klings chattered, lied, and cheated as Klings only can do; Malays swaggered about, decked out in gay attire, and sporting beautiful arms and silver-mounted spears, looking so saucy and bold, that one felt half inclined to pat them on the back, and say, "Well done!" for they knew as well as we did that their hour had struck, and all the scene would soon be dissipated like a dream, and they be pirating elsewhere. A few Chinese, the Jews of the Eastern Archipelago*, were there also. They were so ob-

* It is but justice to these industrious emigrants to say that they have been invaluable as labourers, agriculturists, artisans,

sequious, so anxious to attract the attention of a British midshipman, that he, with all the dignity of that proud caste, allowed them to change a dollar for him. The Chinese were mostly money-changers. The insolent contumely they endured at the hands of the Malays struck me much. The natives of India, when ill-treated, chattered like a nest of rooks. Not so the Chinese: they bore it with cringing and shrinking; but one could see, by the twinkle of their little glittering eyes, that they only abided their time to bite the heel that bruised them. No one could have supposed, from the scene in the bazaar, that fifteen thousand Siamese were close at hand, ready to impale, disembowel, or play any of the many pranks I have elsewhere related, upon each or all of those before me.

People, however, in the East, live with their lives in their hands; and, most of all, such a floating population as that of Kangah, consisting of pirates and those bloodsuckers who lived upon them, wretches who fattened alike upon them and their prey.

I now proposed to go to the elephants, which, from our guide's description, were at the other end of the town. We had just disengaged ourselves from the

and merchants, throughout our colonies; and better-conducted subjects Her Majesty Queen Victoria no where possesses.

crowd, heat, and strong smells of the bazaar, when a general commotion occurred in the town, which had hitherto exhibited no signs of life except in the bazaar. Boys ran along screaming, women ran out in the balconies, and appeared very excited; and soon afterwards a large body of Malays, armed to the teeth, covered with dust, and looking much wayworn, passed rapidly along, marching, however, without order or military array.

I was informed through Jamboo, that it was impossible for me to visit the royal stables to-day, as some important event had evidently just taken place, and a great chief — possibly the redoubted Datoo himself — had arrived. I did not much care about pushing the point, as I was on shore on my own responsibility; and Haggi Loūng's warning left me no excuse but that of curiosity, if we got into a scrape. One of my men now sidled up to me, and said that some of the natives were getting up a report that I was a spy, and that one of them had threatened him. I decided to return to my boat; and, from expressions which were uttered by those around, found it was high time I did so. Indeed, I am not sure we should have escaped without a scuffle, had not a venerable-looking man joined us, and, by his authority, enforced a little more re-

spect from the rabble. He, however, though extremely civil to me, told a deliberate falsehold, and said that the excitement arose from "the Malays under Datoo Mahomet Alee having retaken Quedah!" whereas the truth was, that the Siamese were again victorious, and marching down on the good town of Kangah.

The fidelity of the Malays generally to their chiefs was, in my opinion, most praiseworthy: they never betrayed any secrets, and never were otherwise than sanguine of eventual success. The most unfortunate, and even those apparently discontented, never proffered intelligence; and if cross-examined, invariably told us tales which we afterwards would discover had been invented to satisfy our inquisitiveness, without betraying their countrymen or chiefs. Men who had escaped from the surprise and massacre of Allegagon, or the horrors of the march upon Sangorah, never upbraided their general, Mahomet Type-etam, but spoke of him as a very brave although harsh man; and one could not help recognising this valuable trait of fidelity in the Malays, and expressing a hope that in time we should find a way of enlisting that feeling generally on the side of their British rulers.* That they were hot-blooded and impetuous,

* The Ceylon rifle regiments are a most valuable corps composed of Malays famous for their fidelity to their British

there is no need to deny; but that fiery independence of character could have been favourably moulded to their own advantage, had Europeans tried to conciliate the Malays instead of crushing them.

Like spaniels, the natives of the whole sea-board of the Indian peninsula lick the hand that chastises them: not so the Orang-Malayau; and we Englishmen should be the first to honour a race who will not basely submit to abuse or tyranny.

The ebb-tide was running strong as I jumped into my boat, and casting off from the shore, we were soon "spinning"—to use a seaman's phrase—down the stream; and Kangah, like a bright and sunny picture which one has seen but once in a lifetime, left a pleasant impression on my youthful mind not easily effaceable: one of those bright spots in the expanse of memory, which carry one back from manhood, worldly struggles, and withered aspirations, to that blest time —

> "When the breeze of a joyful dawn blew free
> In the silken sail of infancy."

It is, I think, still a question which is the happier man of the two; he who loving the beautiful in all

officers, and have, during the war in Kandy, done right good service. Their present boast is, that if a pin is lost in the forests of Ceylon, they can find it.

its varied forms, finds it in some narrow spot, where his lot in life may have fixed him, some petty area in which he is born, exists, and dies;—or the wanderer, who for awhile is being pushed on from one gorgeous scene to the other, his recollection glowing with the memory of the exceeding beautiful—of the golden East, its flood of glowing light and depth of purple shade, the waving palms, and gloomy forests peopled by races who have borrowed their passions and feelings from the burning sun; and then returns to some quiet nook in the gloomy north, to await the "canker and the worm," cheering his latter days by the reminiscences of the bright and beautiful he has elsewhere enjoyed.

Some miles below Kangah the ebbing tide had rendered a spot in the river fordable, and we had some difficulty in passing it: whilst detained for this purpose, a Malay and his family crossed it. He, from his dress, was evidently of the better class, and armed like a very Rustan. The Asiatic indifference of this hero to the safety of his wives and family amused me: on reaching the water, he stalked across the ford, without even deigning to look behind to see how his three or four children fared. The two women were very modestly clad in blue sarangs, one of which crossed the chest close under the arms, and

the other hung like a petticoat from the hips to the ancles. They, poor souls! were loaded with all the household goods of their lord, as well as those of their children, who, following at their heels, had few garments to boast of: indeed, the two youngest were perfectly naked, with the exception of a silver fig-leaf, or heart, which hung in front, and an amulet tied round the neck by a bit of string. These imps were not tall enough to ford the river, but took the water, to my astonishment, like fish, and gambolled across the stream.

No interruption took place at Parlis, and, aided by a rapid tide, we reached the boats in good time; no one being more cordial in his reception of me than my coxswain, the worthy Jadee. I slept soundly that night, and my lullaby was the voice of Jadee, holding forth to Jamboo on my good fortune in having found Mahomet Alee absent, for he could not be brought to believe that he would have allowed me to procure water. In this idea, however, Jadee was mistaken; for we afterwards knew that the Datoo had been perfectly aware of my visit to Kangah, but his policy was now to try and establish amicable relations with the white men in his rear, as the ten thousand muskets of His Bankokian Majesty pressed him sadly in his front.

Indeed, affairs were now in a desperate position with the Malay chieftains; yet they determined to play the game out to the last card, in the hope of some lucky turn of chances in their favour. Eastern armies, they knew, were readily assembled and as quickly dispersed: famine or pestilence had, on a former occasion, swept away in a few days a Siamese host: it might do so again; and, worse come to the worst, they had always their home—the sea—open to them, provided they could give us the slip.

Intelligence now reached us that prahus had assembled in some part of the Lancavas, or Laddas, preparatory to covering the flight of the chiefs, and redoubled the anxieties of our captain's position. He despatched the Siamese brig, which had joined from Quedah, with two armed prahus under Siamese colours, to cruise about and endeavour to discover the position of the secreted prahus, and enjoined the utmost vigilance on all our parts. Anxiety for the *dénouement* to take place lengthened out the last few days of March to an intolerable extent, and, perhaps, the torment we endured from the incessant onslaught of musquitoes and sand-flies added to our impatience. At night, all sleep was out of the question, until, worn with watchfulness and the painful irritation of thousands of bites, we dropped

into a short and feverish slumber. Nothing served to keep the sand-flies off: they were smoke-proof and fire-proof; they bled you just as freely if the skin was rubbed over with oil or vinegar, lime or treacle: nothing seemed to check their abominable thirst for blood. Happily, this fearful pest had only lately commenced, and we could look forward to a speedy termination of it, not only from the end of the blockade being at hand, but because, in April, the heavy squalls of wind and rain which mark the close of the north-east monsoon would destroy them, by blowing their hosts to sea.

Pulo Quetam, or Crab Island, was now becoming quite a gay scene; fugitives from the province commenced to pass down, and many found their canoes so unsafe as to be obliged to stay there for repairs—forming little encampments, under temporary huts of boughs and branches, in which the curious might study the manners and customs of the Malays with the greatest facility. The inhabitants of the neighbouring village drove a roaring trade with the blockading force in the sale of anything that was eatable, —whether flesh, fish, or fowl. The variety, however, was not great; poultry being the principal article they had for sale, and rice, which was of a very excellent quality, and still so cheap as to prove that

the assertion was not without some foundation, that Quedah province is capable of growing rice enough to support all the population of the Straits of Malacca. There were no less than four different species of common rice—all excellent in quality; but there was a naturally sweet description, which could be converted into sweetmeats without the aid of sugar, and, if imported into England, would be invaluable for household purposes to pastrycooks.

CHAP. XXI.

Social Evenings. — Quaintness of English Seamen. — The Adventures of Lucas. — Runs away to Liverpool. — Enters on board of an African Trader. — The Voyage to the Bights. —Fever. — Deaths. — Difficulty in leaving Port. — A new Captain joins. — Voyage Home. — Sufferings from want of Water. — Disorderly Scenes. — A Fight. — Villanous Beverage. — A Man flogged to Death. — A horrid post-mortem Examination.—Temporary Relief.—Recklessness.— Sufferings. — A second Case of Murder. — Lucas a Sailor, *nolens volens*.

As the majority of the boats were now together, there was more sociability among the crews than we had ever before had; and the dear old "Hyacinth" being notoriously one of the most united and smartest crews on the East India Station, everything that could relieve monotony was done by both seamen and officers in the best spirit of unselfishness. The crews of the pinnace and cutter had been remarkably healthy, although living in open boats for four months, and their spirits were proportionately light. For several hours in the evening, songs would be sung and yarns would be told over the

supper pipe, or grog, and the loud chorus to the deliciously quaint melodies of

> " On Gosport beach I landed, that place of noted fame,
> And I called for a bottle of good brandy,
> To treat my lovely, lovely dame ! " &c.,

or,

> " She gave unto me a gay gold ring,
> And a locket fill'd with hair," &c. &c.,

would roll through the jungles of Parlis, and put to flight all things earthly and unearthly; but if the honest fellows' melodies partook of the rudely harmonious, their yarns were decidedly well worth hearing. In all cases, they merely related their own adventures; and it required no fiction to make them deeply interesting. The hand is now cold which could truly tell a sailor's narrative, in all its original phraseology and strong characteristics — the naval Fielding, Captain Marryat; and it is only in having sailors' histories told in their own way, that the general reader can ever form a correct idea of all their peculiarities of character. They have changed somewhat from Marryat's day, but still preserve all the originality of character for which their forefathers were famous: they do not drink quite so hard, nor swear so much, but they are just as overflowing with

wit and humour; and the smattering of education which enables the majority to read and the few to write, has in no way injured—on the contrary, improved—the original view they always take of what passes under their notice. I shall not attempt to repeat any one of their yarns in its original clothing; but perhaps, whilst we are waiting for the closing scene in the blockade of Quedah, I may be pardoned for relating a strange tale, which I wrote down as it was told to me, by a young seaman; and, as it is somewhat startling, I may assure the reader that I have reason to believe every word to be true.

We had lately entered a young sailor, called Lucas, from a merchantman: he evidently was educated far beyond his station in life, and I heard some of the men remark that he had boasted of being the son of a gentleman. Watching for a good opportunity, I persuaded him to tell me who he was, and how he came to be in such a situation.

"My father," he said, "was a respectable tenant-farmer living near one of the sea-ports in the north of Ireland. His family consisted of several daughters, and myself, his only son. He spent a good deal of money upon my education, and tried hard to stifle in me a strong and early inclination for the sea—a taste

I had acquired by my visit to the shipping in the harbour.

"I was sent to an inland school, to more effectually wean me from salt-water. I was in one continual row with my Dominie, and finding me very unruly, he reported me to my father, who caused me to be more severely punished and lectured. I determined to escape from what I regarded as cruelty and oppression, and, in spite of father and schoolmaster, to go to sea. Watching a good opportunity, I left school, reached Belfast, got on board a billyboy* bound for Liverpool, and landed there with a few shillings in my pocket. The master of the lodging-house that I put up at introduced me to the engineer of a steamer running between Glasgow and Liverpool, and I shipped with him as engine-room boy. This life I soon became tired of: the engineer seemed to consider it his privilege to thrash me whenever anything went wrong in the engine-room. All day — and all night too, if we were under weigh — there was one incessant call for Boy Lucas! 'Boy, oil that bearing!' 'Boy, wipe down this!' and, 'Clean up that!' In short, I became a perfect white slave: there was but one way of escape — I again ran away.

* A small description of coasting vessel, common to the British Isles.

"The abominable Scotch engineer and the steamer had not, however, sickened me of the sea; I was determined to get out to foreign countries, and to avoid the coasting trade, which is all very well for grown-up sailors, but bitter work for boys or novices. I was afraid to go back to my old lodgings, for the master of the house would have handed me over to the engineer again, so I lived about as I best could: some of my poor Irish countrymen and women often gave me a bit of food, when I had starved through a long day, going from ship to ship, asking captains to take me to the East Indies.

"I was almost despairing of success, and just on the point of returning to my father, when the master of an African trader offered to ship me as a boy. I jumped at the chance, and joined immediately. She was a large heavy-looking brig, bound to the Bonny* for palm oil. I afterwards had good cause to know that she was a crazy old craft that had been condemned as being even unfit for the Quebec timber trade. I and one or two ship-keepers were only at first on board of the brig in the river: we had to pump her out every two hours, which I thought

* The Bonny, a nautical phrase for the Bights of Benin, into which the river Bonny flows.

rather strange; the more so that the chief mate warned me, that he would break my neck if he heard me say it was necessary to do so to any of the seamen who came on board to enter. Starvation had humbled me, and I held my tongue, although I saw that during the day the mate kept the working pump-bolt *, which was as bright as silver, in his pocket, and substituted for it a rusty stiff bolt, which gave the pump the appearance of never being worked. This was done to prevent the men being afraid of entering on board a vessel in which the extra work of pumping would necessarily be very harassing.

"The day came for the crew to sign the articles of agreement upon which they were to sail in the brig. Besides the captain and mate, there were a cooper and thirteen hands; each of the latter before signing the articles, examined the pump-bolt, to see if it was bright, and expressed gratification at finding it as rusty as a tight ship's ought to be: they little thought how my arms were aching from labouring at the handle — or what rogues the ship-keepers and mate were! A few days afterwards, we dropped to the fair-way buoy; and one fine day all our men were

* The pump-bolt is the pin or fulcrum upon which the handle of a ship's pump works. Of course, the more the pump is worked, the brighter the pump-bolt becomes.

brought off, the majority so dead drunk as to suffer afterwards from delirium tremens; and a steam-tug took us outside the river, and let us go to find our way as best we could. The captain, mate, cooper, and I set all the sails, and lived on deck for about six-and-thirty hours, until some of the sailors came to their senses, which they did not do until they had fought and wallowed like wild beasts in a miserable hole called the 'fore-peak,' where the seamen had to eat and sleep. We had a pretty good passage, although the men soon found out that the brig would neither sail nor steer very well, and was uncommonly leaky: they seemed, however, accustomed to being so entrapped into bad vessels, and only abused the captain, who enjoyed the whole affair as a capital joke. The mate fell dangerously ill with some loathsome disease; there was no doctor, and he soon became such a nuisance that no one would help him. The captain let him take anything be liked out of the small medicine-chest, and at last death released the poor fellow from his miseries, though not before he had begged and prayed that he might die. His coffin was an original one: it consisted of his chest, into which they put him in a doubled-up posture, and launched him into the sea without so much as a prayer. Indeed, the crew were as bad a collection of men as could well be

brought together. Although a ship's boy, I did not like them; their language was at all times gross, and they appeared for the most part to be — what they occasionally boasted they were — the scrapings of Hell, Bedlam, and Newgate!

"We got directions at the Bonny from a ship's agent to go to a river, of which I forget the name: we went there, and laid the ship up, collecting palm oil by driblets. The fever soon broke out among the crew, which was not to be wondered at, considering the dirt and the want of air in the horrid hole they lived in. Some of the men would go to bed in the standing bunks, of which each man had one, and remain there for a couple of days at a time without getting up: they died like sheep, and were pitched overboard to the sharks. The captain likewise was attacked by fever; and although a drunken wretch of a doctor, who was kicked out of another vessel, joined us, he could not save the poor skipper, who followed the major part of his crew.

"Kroomen were entered to get on loading the ship, and, in time, we were ready for sea, with a full cargo of heavy wood and oil. But how to get the ship home would have puzzled anybody but the rascally agent who was employed by our owners; for, in addition to the want of captain and mate, the former had,

in his delirium, thrown overboard all our nautical instruments and charts.

"Not far from us there was another vessel, belonging to different owners: her mate was a notorious ruffian in the African trade, and our agent promised him, if he would, on his own responsibility and risk, get our brig home to Liverpool, he should, over and above his just recompense, receive a bonus of £100 sterling. Meantime, one or two seamen of bad character, and seven Kroomen, were shipped for the passage home. One evening, late, the new captain joined: he had stolen some instruments from his former ship, and, at day-dawn, we weighed and put to sea, having actually at that time only six casks of provisions; and the greediness of the agent to fill us with oil had barely left in the brig twelve days' water. Some of the crew growled about it, and the new captain was evidently frightened, when he learnt how little there was in the vessel; but the agent knew he dare not now stay, and said, 'Never mind; *beg* your way home! you will soon be on the track of the homeward-bound ships.' Hardly were we clear of the mouth of the river, when the skipper who had been robbed came off in a boat to recover his property; our hero swore he would knock the first man's brains out who tried to board us, and,

with an axe in his hand, seemed likely to do it. The boat satisfied herself with firing musketry at us; we merely kept under cover, and escaped without injury, through the breeze freshening. So far as I was concerned, my joy was too great at the prospect of returning home, to care a fig who was injured by our doing so.

"Next day we were put upon an allowance of water, and we all soon discovered that we had a perfect fiend to deal with in the skipper. Three weeks of foul wind now occurred, at the end of which time only a few gallons of water remained, and a horrible death threatened us.

"The captain now kept the ship away for some island; but he ought to have done so sooner; and on the second day, he came on deck with a small pot of water, called all hands aft, and served out the last drop of water by spoonfuls at a time. A dreadful week now followed: the wind was scant, and our deep-laden leaky craft did not move through the water; we ceased to speak to each other; we seemed like so many dumb creatures, and sometimes ruffians who had long been strangers to tears would be seen weeping like so many children, and praying to God for mercy. It became dead calm, with a scorching sun, and the clouds, which sometimes mustered on the horizon, brought neither rain nor wind!"

Lucas's description of the horrors they then endured, brought vividly to my mind the lines of Coleridge:—

"Down dropt the breeze, the sails dropt down,—
'Twas sad as sad could be;
And we did speak only to break
The silence of the sea!

All in a hot and copper sky
The bloody sun at noon
Right up above the mast did stand,
No bigger than the moon.

Day after day, day after day,
We stuck, nor breath, nor motion;
As idle as a painted ship
Upon a painted ocean.

Water, water, everywhere,
And all the boards did shrink;
Water, water, everywhere,
Nor any drop to drink."

"How," said he, "we used to sit and watch the setting sun, and darkness closing in upon us; for then the dew would fall, and all night long the unfortunate crew crawled about, licking the moisture from the spars, decks, and paintwork of the ship's side! We all became hideously selfish. I remember that I had, by good chance, a strong iron kettle. I set to work to boil sea-water, and condense the va-

pour; but I hardly made a pint of fresh water in twenty-four hours. However, I succeeded in supporting myself, without having recourse, as the majority of the crew had, to drinking salt water, and thus avoided being attacked with dysentery, as those poor creatures were.

"A Frenchman whom we had shipped in Africa discovered that the captain had secreted several bottles of vinegar for his own consumption; and, as discipline was now totally at an end, he purloined some of the bottles, and ran forward with them, chased by the captain, who fired several shots at him with his pistols, but was afraid to descend into the 'fore-peak' after the culprit, or to otherwise call him to account. This prize was, of course, a great boon to us all, and had it been diamond-dust we could not have husbanded it more carefully than we did.

"The skipper, at all times of a most unreasonable temperament, seemed now to have lost all restraint over his passions, and seldom did a day pass without an act of wanton cruelty. One first watch, the Frenchman happened to be licking the dew off the capstan on the quarter-deck; this the skipper usually appropriated as his perquisite, and, in a fury at what he considered the Frenchman's insolence, he

took up a heavy piece of wood which happened to be at hand, and, as the sailor leaned over the capstan, struck him with full force on the back of the head. The Frenchman's cap saved his life, but his lips were cut through and his front teeth loosened; he gave a yell of rage, and rushed into the cook's caboose for a knife. The captain, at the same time, got a pistol out of the cabin; a scuffle ensued, in which the pistol was fired without effect, but the Frenchman gave the captain an ugly cut across the ear with his knife. The men then interfered, and they were separated.

"The cabin-boy having been attacked with dysentery, I was ordered to take his place. It struck me that if all the empty wine and beer bottles in the store-room were drained out, a little liquid might be procured for us all. I mentioned this to the crew, and they adopted my suggestion, obtaining, in all, about two quarts of what, under other circumstances, would have been considered a villanous compound. The captain took charge of it, and gave us a spoonful apiece; the remainder he placed below, on the cabin table, ready for a similar issue on the morrow.

"Unhappily, a young man who was at the helm, half-delirious with fever and thirst, observed it, and fancying no one would detect him, he watched an opportunity, left the helm, ran down below, and

drank every drop of what was left. He was not quick enough to escape our lynx-eyed captain, who knocked him down, and, calling for his Kroomen, they lashed the poor wretch up to the rigging, stripped for a flogging. The captain first beat him unmercifully with a rope's end, and then made the Kroomen, in turn, do the same: the rest of the crew, myself included, were too broken down to interfere; indeed, some of them never came on deck at all. I went to the man after he was cut down: he was almost flayed on the back, and insensible. I threw sea-water over him, and, after a while, he came-to, but he was evidently dying, and begged me, when I got to England, to remember how he had been murdered: that night he died. The captain seemed a little frightened; the more so, that the crew became rather excited, and the Frenchman, as a ringleader, called him, murderer, and vowed he should be hung if God spared them to reach home.

"His fears, however, seemed to render him the more insensible to humanity; for, on the morrow, he insisted upon the drunken creature who called himself a doctor, dissecting the corpse, and holding a *post-mortem* examination. Anything more horribly revolting than the whole scene, I defy the world to produce: the instruments used were the knives and

saws in daily use on board the ship, for, I need hardly say, such a doctor had none of his own. All hands were sent for, much nonsense was spoken by the captain and doctor, to prove the man died from natural causes; and the poor dead man's entrails and brains were handled as if they were those of an animal; and then they were hove overboard, after which the body was thrown, just as it was, into the sea, for the sharks that were cruising about to fight over and gorge upon. It was enough to make one go mad to see such horrors perpetrated, and the feeling of utter misery was something I cannot describe.

"Several men died: the poor Frenchman was of the number, and we were in the last stage of exhaustion, when God sent us assistance, in the shape of a foreign vessel, that very humanely gave us a quantity of water and a little biscuit. Had she been a countryman, we should one and all have abandoned the brig; but we could not explain to them what we wanted: indeed, they did not appear to wish to have us as shipmates, which was not to be wondered at, considering what a cut-throat set of diseased villains all the crew looked. After utter want, we had now, with care, sufficient water and food to reach the chops of the Channel, where a

man-of-war would be found, to help us if the winds were foul; and I must do our rascally skipper the justice to say, that he pointed this out to the crew, and begged them to refrain from taking more than a certain small allowance.

"But no! they had been starved. We had a fair breeze, and provisions, and they determined to feast; the consequence was, as had been foretold, we met foul winds after passing the Western Islands, which, through bad navigation, could not be sighted, and again did we run short of water; and although in a higher latitude and cooler climate, still we suffered terribly. The cabin-boy died, and nearly all the English seamen, and the cooper became dangerously ill; and I was so weak as to be hardly able to walk, while the captain, though looking rather distressed at times, was, if possible, more brutal than ever. A fresh west wind sprang up: we squared yards to it; but could not make much sail, for who was to reduce it if a gale came on? Ships seemed to avoid us, for we wore all the signs of a ship with the plague—our yards and sails looking what sailors call 'no how,' and the vessel wallowed in, rather than sailed over the sea.

"We had even ceased to go aloft to look for vessels in sight, and our crew, now reduced to six men, were

just keeping body and soul together by means of condensed steam caught in a swab that we sucked in turn. Scurvy, fever, and thirst had reduced us to perfect scarecrows; we no longer heeded the cruelties or curses of our skipper, and had only sense enough left to go to the helm in turn, and keep the brig's head upon her course. No help came until we were in soundings, and then merely through getting so close to a ship in the night that she could not in common humanity run away from us, when at daylight we hoisted the colours union downwards.

"She bore down; and when we saw her do so, I ran to the fore-peak, and said, 'We are saved! here comes a ship!' Only four men appeared upon our deck! A cask was necessary, and as we were not strong enough to unstow and get up one from the hold, the cooper, who was very ill, was brought on deck to tighten up the hoops of the two scuttle-butts which were on the upper-deck. The poor wretch had to sit down, and hammer home the hoops whilst we turned the casks round. The work naturally did not proceed as fast as the rapid approach of the ship required. This so infuriated our insane skipper (for I believe he was mad at times), that he commenced abusing the unfortunate man, who in reply telling him to go to the devil — whither he was most

undoubtedly bound—worked him into a fury. He struck the cooper several violent blows, and at his last one the man rolled over into the lee-scuppers, and in a few minutes was a corpse—the captain, a murderer twice!

"The strange ship was an American one: the master came on board, supplied us with water and some provisions, sent a mate and one or two men to help the brig into port, we being then only 150 miles off Cape Clear, and then the American bore up on her course to New York.

"We arrived at Liverpool without further accident, and the authorities there took charge of the case against the captain. There were sufficient witnesses without me; and beyond having my deposition taken in writing, I was not troubled by the lawyers. The captain, I believe, was transported for life, or confined in a mad-house.

"This cruise had thoroughly sickened me of the African trade, and I might add of the sea likewise. I started off to Belfast: my father had died, and my sisters, having raised all the ready cash they could upon his property, had with an uncle of mine started for Australia, and were supposed to have settled in Port Adelaide. The sea was now my only resource. I shipped in a vessel bound to India, and

you know the rest, sir. I fancy I shall end, if I am lucky, in being a warrant-officer one of these days."

Such was the tale of the sailor Lucas: the reader will allow it to be a strange one. It happened twenty years ago: yet strange things are still done where the blue sea and silent stars are the sole witnesses; and the skippers of palm oil traders are not the only ones who act upon the Muscovite principle, that "the Heavens are high, and the Czar afar off."

CHAP. XXII.

Jadee offers the Loan of a Love-Letter. — A Midshipman's Scruples. — The "Emerald" ordered to Pouchou. — Enter the River during the Night. — Jadee's Suggestions for warding off Musquitoes. — Jadee foresees Trouble. — A nautical Superstition of the olden Day. — The Flight.—The Sampan repulsed. — The Chase. — A Prahu captured.— Proceed to Tangong Gaboose. — Starving piratical Fugitives. — A Threat of Cannibalism. — The Horrors of Asiatic Warfare. — Jamboo's View of the Malays' Position. — Reflections.

ABOUT this time, we received from Tonkoo Mahomet Said formal expressions of his gratitude for the kindness shown to his wife and family. From them he had somehow received intelligence direct from Penang. Of the lovely little Baju-Mira I did not again hear; and Jadee proposed that I should send her a letter written by my interpreter. Amused at the idea, I suggested that he should compose one for me, as, by his own acknowledgment, he had been a perfect lady-killer at Singapore. Jadee was not easily abashed where his vanity was involved, and very handsomely placed at my disposal a love-letter which

he was about to address to his Dulcinea at Penang. Before accepting it, however, I thought it as well to make Jamboo translate the document word for word to me—a measure which soon showed me the impropriety of sending any such *billet doux;* although it indulged in the usual amount of poetical allusions to the beauty of the fair one's eyes, nose, lips, teeth, and hair, with graceful compliments about her figure, her walk, and her voice, it wound up with an abrupt proposal of marriage, entering rather freely into the charms of that blessed state of bondage; and as a further inducement to overcome any scruples the young lady might entertain on the score of Jadee's matrimonial inexperience, he assured her that seven wives were already placed on his list, though she should alone be his Penang sultaness.

These were lengths to which I, as a midshipman in the receipt of ten sovereigns a quarter, did not feel justified in going; "alas, for the social wants that sin against the strength of youth!" But Jadee, like an evil spirit, whispered that an anna a day (three half-pence) would equip and support even such a Peri as Baju-Mira, in a style of princely magnificence, only to be read of in the "Arabian Nights' Entertainments." Possibly, recollections of a stern-faced captain, and the "I'll stop your leave, sir," of

a ruthless first-lieutenant, kept me from disturbing the peace of mind of the fair Malay, and then other affairs distracted my attention.

April the 2nd found us surrounded by a flying multitude, and a repetition of the wretched scenes enacted at Quedah. The Siamese were finally victorious, and *Sauve qui peut!* was the cry. Rumours were flying about that the war prahus were going to make a dash out; one or two threatening messages were sent, and it became every moment more certain that the Tonkoos must fly, or fall into Siamese hands. The excitement was intense, and no one knew the minute that the pirates might swoop down upon the little blockading squadron, and make us fight for our very lives.

In the middle of all this, while, youngster-like, I was longing to "flesh my maiden sword," some instructions arrived from Captain Warren to the officer commanding the boats (the present Captain G. Drake), ordering a gun-boat to be detached to watch another river called the "Pouchou," about four miles to the northward. As the junior officer, it fell to my lot to go; and I own I left with the moral conviction that there would be a bloody fray, and the little "Emerald" would be left out of it; a feeling not assuaged by my waggish brother officer

Halkett, who made a pen-and-ink caricature of a sulky midshipman tied by the leg at a distance, while he and others were slaying whole hecatombs of enemies.

My gun-boat was soon off the mouth of the Pouchou: like all the western Malayan rivers, it had a tidal bar across its mouth, though abundance of water within. The tide being then on the ebb, we hauled to seaward for an Island called Pulo Pangang, or Long Island. We found it full of Malay fugitives — men, women, and children; their sufferings from want of water were something hideous to contemplate. Some had already died, others were perishing; yet, what could we do? The "Hyacinth" and her boats had long been on a rigid allowance; every drop of water we could spare I ordered to be given away; and a few days afterwards, as will be seen, we were reduced in consequence to great straits.

How all these people had reached the island, we could not learn; but they owned that they came from the neighbourhood of Parlis; and some of the families remembered seeing me on the occasion of my visit to Kangah. From them we learnt that the Pouchou ran parallel to the Parlis river, and close past the town of that name. These fugitives had, I suspect,

availed themselves of the former stream as a means of escape. All expressed sorrow and anxiety when they heard I was going to blockade it; indeed, one man of superior aspect was evidently distressed when he learnt that it was to be so, and tried hard to persuade me not to go there until the morrow; "for," said he, "there will be a number of women and children down to-night, and if frightened back by you, they will fall into the hands of the cruel Siamese."

A beautiful night with a bright moon lighted up the sea and forest-clad shores, as with the first of the land-wind I sought my way into the Pouchou river. The rippling music of my gun-boat's stem, as she cut through the phosphorescent sea, the whirling eddies of molten silver, which in a long line astern showed our trail, and the low call of the leadsman, were the only signs of life. As we approached the bar in the shoal water, the fish, affrighted at our intrusion, darted singly away, leaving a long fiery streak behind them in the sea, such as a rocket leaves in its path through the air, and the night-hawk and other nocturnal birds swept round us, and uttered their characteristic cries.

With some difficulty—for the tide only just afforded water enough for us to float over the shoals of the

bar — we got into the river, which I was sorry to find was very deep towards either bank, as this would entail a loss of time in getting under weigh to chase. However, there was nothing for it but to anchor; for when I suggested the propriety of merely fastening to the trunks of some tall pëon* trees, Jadee protested earnestly, assuring me that such a proceeding was contrary to all Malayan tactics; "if," said he, pointing to the black water which flowed in amongst the jungle, enveloped in a darkness that the keenest eye could not penetrate, "if you would desire to see the sun rise, oh Tuhan, never secure the craft so close to a place where all the fighting men of Parlis might lie hid in canoes, and see us without our seeing them. Besides, did you not hear the cry of that night-bird?—may it be cursed! and assuredly it is so, being but the restless soul of an unbeliever! — that cry, my officer, denotes trouble!"

Knowing that there was always some sound sense mixed up with my worthy subordinate's superstitions, I at once proceeded to the south side of the river, and anchored the vessel in the deep shadow thrown over the stream by the lofty jungle trees.

* Peön, a tree common to the Malayan forests, and much used for masts and spars.

We were close to a point, beyond which there was a pretty bend in the river now strongly lit up by the moon, so that we should have a few minutes' warning in the event of the pirates coming down. The guns were cleared away, the powder-magazine opened, the sweeps placed ready, and then each man at his post lay down to rest as best he might. For my part, had I been inclined, it would have been impossible to close an eye. Ye gods! how the musquitoes and sand-flies fed upon me! Surrounded with burning cocoa-nut husks, the pungent smoke threatening ophthalmia, I underwent a torture only to be compared to the Mexican warrior's bed of burning coals.

My tender-hearted coxswain felt for me, and suggested many modes of relief. "Could I read Arabic?" "No." "It was a pity, for some refreshing chapter of the Koran, which he named, would prevent anything harming me."

"How, if I am not a believer, Jadee?" I inquired.

"God is merciful!" he exclaimed, devoutly and cleverly. "Would I allow him to tie an amulet on my arm?" "For what purpose?" "To keep off all evil, and assuredly the musquitoes come under that denomination."

Accordingly, an amulet was tied on. Like most others, it consisted, I fancy, of some extract from the Koran, stitched up in linen; at any rate, as I anticipated, the musquitoes did not respect it. "Jadee," I said, "I see that cry of the night-hawk was indeed a forewarning of my fate: you will only find in the morning the skin and bones of what was a tolerably fat midshipman; take them to the big ship, and you shall be rewarded."

For a moment the scamp laughed. "Hush! oh, my officer," he said, "you white men laugh at what the poor Malay man says; but if you lived like us in these great forests, and for years had no other home than a sampan, and no associates but the birds and beasts, you would know, as we do, what they wish to say to us." Honest old Jadee! why should I ridicule thee? How long is it since we could afford to laugh at others' superstition? Here, before me, lies the history of a voyage made by English sailors, and not very long ago either: let me transcribe a paragraph of it.

A Captain Cowley is going a voyage round the world. It is the 29th June, 1686, and his ship is in 19° 45′ south latitude, longitude 21° 26′ west. These facts assure us of the worthy sailor's exactness. "We had," he says, "this day great feasting on board us,

and the commanders of the other two ships returning on board their vessels, we gave them some guns (that is, *fired*), which they returned again. But it is strangely observable, that whilst they were loading their guns, they heard a voice in the sea, crying out, 'Come, help! come, help! a man overboard! come, help!' This made them forthwith bring their ship to the wind, thinking to take the man up, but heard no more of him. Then they came on board of us, to see if we had lost a man: but we, nor the other ship, had not a man wanting; for, upon strict examination, we found that in all three ships we had our complement of men, which made them all to conclude, that it was the spirit of some man that had been drowned in that latitude by accident!"*

Hour after hour passed; the dew fell cold, and the chilled crew sat drawn up in their sarongs, with their chins resting on their knees, sleeping a dog's sleep. The moon had sloped towards her setting, the flood tide was done, and my gun-boat had just canted to the ebb, when the look-out man and Jadee pointed towards a mere shell of a canoe with two men in it, which was already on our beam, but on the opposite

* Capt. William Hacke's "Collection of Original Voyages," 1699. Dedicated to John, Lord Somers, Lord High Chancellor of England.

side of the river. "Stop that canoe!" I said impatiently.

"Hark!" said Jadee. "Prahus! In the name of Allah! don't make a noise: that is only a spy, to see the coast is all clear."

The blood leapt through my veins, as I now distinctly heard, borne on the faint land-wind, the creaking noise made by the ratan fastenings used for a Malay prahu's oars. Before the men could be roused, and our cable shortened-in, the strangers swept round the point ahead; and as the light struck on them, I saw distinctly two fine large prahus, pulling eight or ten oars of a side, and a very long low canoe full of men.

My plucky little quarter-master, Sutoo, asked permission to take two hands in the sampan, and to head them at once, whilst we got under weigh. The tide soon brought them close to.

"Stop, O prahus, to be searched!" shouted Jamboo. They were evidently taken by surprise, and for a minute every oar and paddle ceased to ply; but it was only for a minute: they saw us, and, determined to push by, gave way with vigour; whilst female voices cried out, "Do not fire; we are women — only women!"

"Anchor, or we fire!" Jamboo and I shouted;

whilst Jadee and his crew rattled in the cable like seamen.

At that moment Sutoo with our sampan grappled one of the prahus, and gallantly tried to stop one of them at least; there was a gleam of steel, and then a shout from Sutoo to fire away, for that they were armed.

As the gun-boat swung round upon her heel, Sutoo came alongside with a spear sticking in his boat that had been aimed at him. A small ratan shield, which the man fortunately had on his arm when he grasped the prahu's gunwale, showed a deep mark where a parang, the Malay sword, had come down on it.

Directly the bow-gun would bear on the nearest prahu, I fired at her with grape, and a shriek rang in our ears which convinced me that there were women on board, for the purpose, as it was immediately suggested, of preventing us firing at them. I felt that to tow a boat-load of wounded Malay women alongside the "Hyacinth" was not likely to conduce to my professional reputation, and I therefore ceased firing. There was nothing for it now but to chase and catch them; no easy job, I knew well, for the channels were intricate, and the night mist hung heavy to seaward.

"Give way, my Malay men; we must catch and board them." "Ya! ya! ya!" shouted the crew as they bent to their sweeps. The excitement was gloriously intense: we could just see the prahus; but the canoe, which Sutoo assured me was a very fine one, pulling at least twenty paddles, was gone. I naturally looked to the prahus alone. At first they made sail as if for the Lancavas Islands, keeping the wind abeam; but we soon began to close with them: they then altered their course, and bore up among some small islands and shallows in Setouè Bay. At last, by a lucky accident, we cut off one prahu, and got her in a bight out of which she could not escape: an effort to push past we checked with a round of grape, which she replied to with some blunderbusses without doing any harm; and then her crew put the helm up, and ran her over the shoals towards the jungle until she fairly stuck in the mud.

Daylight was now breaking, and we could see the Malays of the prahu decamp with their arms to the shore. Leaving Jadee to cover me with the "Emerald's" guns, and to keep her in deep water, I took six hands and boarded the prahu. She was a fine vessel, with no guns mounted; but doubtless had had them at one time. Half a dozen old

women, and two men wounded by our fire, were all we found in her. Everything that would lighten the prahu was now thrown overboard, mainly bags of rice and salt, and we soon had the satisfaction of getting her afloat. We did all we could for the wounded men: they were neither of them seriously hurt, and I left two men in charge of the prize, whilst we made sail in search of the other craft. After cruising for three hours without sighting her, I returned to my prize, and took her to the island which I had, on the previous day, found peopled with starving refugees. I told the poor creatures, that as many as liked might go on board of her, and proceed to the British settlements for shelter. The wounded men requested to be landed at the northern part of the Pouchou river, called Tangong Gaboose, where, they assured us, the woods were full of unfortunate Malays like themselves — pirates by our laws.

Having seen the prahu off, we went over to Tangong Gaboose, to await for the tide to rise sufficiently to enable me to get back into my station in the river.

All I could glean from the wounded men was, that they and the other vessel, as well as a canoe pulling many paddles, had left the neighbourhood of Parlis together. They owned to having fought with

Siamese more than once, and that they hoped to do so again: but more than that we could not learn; for of the movements of their chiefs, or Tonkoos, they knew nothing, or would tell nothing.

On landing at the spot indicated by these men, I was utterly astonished, after walking a few hundred yards into the jungle, to find myself amongst a perfect crowd of fugitives. At first they showed signs of distrust; but Jadee soon soothed them with the assurance, that provided Tonkoo Mahomet Alee was not there, he and I did not wish to maltreat the unfortunates. The majority of the men were armed, carrying handsome spears, creeses, and parangs, or long chopper-shaped swords. There could not have been less than 700 souls in these woods, including women and children; an estimate verified by the assertion of a venerable Moolah or Islam divine.

They gathered round and besought aid. I never was very hard-hearted, thank God! but the scene was sufficient to have brought tears into the eyes of even the stern legislators who had declared every pirate, dead or alive, worth 20*l.* to the captor; for here they were, young and old, born and suckled in piracy; knowing no better, and wishing for nothing better, than to be allowed to fight it out fairly with their present foes.

Poor creatures! starvation and thirst were pinching them fearfully, yet there was no escape: the sea behind them, and a ruthless enemy in front. The jungle yielded no fruit; the earth, parched by the long drought, no water. I advised them to send and make terms of surrender to the Siamese. An old man said, "It was certain they must do it, or starve to death;" another, who was by, said "He would as soon *eat* his own children, as run the risk of handing them over to the enemy's soldiery, who," he said, "were composed of all the outcasts of the peninsula, and cared no more for the Siamese authorities — except in so far as they legitimised their villanies — than they did for the Governor of the Straits, Touhan Bonham." I took leave of these poor creatures with a heavy heart, and struck by the threat of cannibalism, asked both Jadee and my interpreter whether such a crime was ever committed amongst the Malays or Siamese. Jadee fought shy of the question, and merely said that there was one tribe in Sumatra who indulged in man-eating; but that if ever an Orang Malayu did it, it must be out of sheer necessity.

My interpreter informed me, that it was a usual term of reproach between one tribe of wild Malays and another to say they were cannibals; and that if

it was remembered what devastating wars were carried on, and had been for centuries, by the Birmese, Siamese, and Malays, and the fearful sufferings entailed upon the conquered, in a country where the jungles yielded little fitted to support life, it would seem more than likely that cannibalism was often committed.

On this subject, quaint, earnest old Purchas tells us of a sad tale in the unparalleled extermination of the old Peguan race and kingdom by the Birmese, in about 1598. I will give his words: "But of all this wealth, then wanting no store, and of so many millions people, were scarcely left seven thousand persons. Men, women, and children had to participate in the king's siege, and those feeding on man's flesh; the parents requiring of the children the life which before they had given to sustain their own; and now laid them not in their bosoms, but in their bowels: — the children oftentimes becoming living sepulchres of their scarce-dead parents! The stronger preyed upon the weaker; and if their flesh was eaten up by their own hunger, leaving nothing but skin and bones to the hungry assaults of these ravenous creatures, they ripped the belly and devoured their inward parts, and breaking the skull sucked out the brains. Yea, the weaker sex was,

by the strength of famine, armed with no less butcherly despight against whomsoever they could meet in the streets of the city, with their knives which they carried about them as harbingers to their teeth in these inhuman human banquets.

"Pardon me, reader," adds the good parson of St. Martin's, by Ludgate Hill, "if upon this spectacle I cause thee, with myself, to stay awhile and wonder. The sun, in his daily journey round about this vast globe, saw then few equal to this Pagan greatnesse, and yet in how short a space He that is Higher than the highest hath abated and abashed this magnificence lower than the lowest of his princes!"

A veritable dish of horrors ending with a fine moral, the reader will say; but I fear the horrors are still not of uncommon occurrence in those parts of Asia, as well as Polynesia, where Mahometanism or Christianity have not yet spread their civilising influence. The former, with all its faults and impurities, was a vast stride in the right direction for the Malayan races of the Archipelago and Polynesia, as any one who has wandered in those localities can attest.

"I wonder," I said to Jamboo, "what will become of these poor wretches?"

"Perhaps all be dead in a few days' time, sar! This very new to you; but Malay man always go on this way; no got no friends. Dutchmen hunt them and kill, because he don't want them to carry trade to Singapore. Englishmen don't like him, because he say, he d—d lazy rascal, always ready for a fight, but will not dig in the fields; too much of a gentleman, sir, for the Company; the Company want fellows, all the same Hindoo, he can kick when he got bad temper. And now come the Siamese. He not bad man, the Siamese, suppose true Siamese; but when he go to war, he get hundred other sort of fellows, who say, 'Come along, let us go rob these Malay pirates!' And so you see all the same you see to-day."

I have no doubt Jamboo was right to a certain extent, though, living as he had done in our Anglo-Malayan settlements, there might be a certain degree of partiality in his heart for the Malayan people.

We soon afterwards re-entered the Pouchou river, and I lent the perishing multitude my sampan to go up the river, and try and procure some water, and we gave them every grain of rice we could spare, poor unfortunates! And I could not help thinking how sad it was, though, maybe, they had inflicted equal if not greater sufferings upon those they had forced to fly from the province of Quedah into the

forest of Patani during the previous year. One could sympathise with the sufferings of the conquerors as well as the conquered in these wretched native wars, and commiserate the thousands who had been victims to the wickedness of the few, repeating the words of an English poetess—

" Yet not less terrible because unknown
Is the last hour of thousands: they retire
From life's throng'd path unnoticed to expire.
As the light leaf, whose fall to ruin bears
Some trembling insect's little world of cares,
Descends in silence, while around waves on
The mighty forest, reckless what is gone!"

* * *

CHAP. XXIII.

A Surprise. — The Stratagem. — Escape of Mahomet Alee. — Jadee indignant. — Disappointment and Consolation. — We report the Escape. — Raising of the Blockade. — The neglected Warning. — The Gig chases the Canoe. — The "Laddas." — A Malayan Night-Scene. — Dream-Land. — Return to Things earthly. — Unsuccessful Search for Prahus. — The Sea-breeze. — The Race. — Short Rations. — Eat Birds'-nests. — A long and distressing Pull. — Zeal and cheerful Conduct of the Crew. — Reflections.

HARDLY had the anchor reached the bottom, before we sought the rest which it had been impossible hitherto to get; and it is needless to say, that after such a night and morning of excitement, I, and I believe all my people except the look-out men, slept soundly for some hours.

The sun had passed the zenith, and all lay hushed in that death-like day-sleep in which nature, as well as man, seems to seek repose during the fervid heat of an equatorial afternoon, when I was roused and told that a boat full of men and women was coming down the river. On being hailed, they

came alongside, gave up their arms, which we broke and tossed overboard, and then to their joy we told them to go in health,—"Salamat gelan!"

As they pushed off, I said in joke, "You may go, for we have caught the Tonkoos!"

"What!" exclaimed an old Malay who was steering the boat, "have you caught Datoo Mahomet Alee? Did he not then escape last night? God is merciful and great," continued he, throwing up his hands, and looking the picture of sorrow.

A feather might have knocked me down; and the old man's astonishment, at being abruptly called back and pulled by the neck and heels out of his canoe by the excited Jadee, was not small.

We told him that he evidently knew all about Mahomet Alee's movements, and unless he wished to be blown away from the bow gun, hung at the ensign-staff, boiled in the coppers—Heaven only knows what Jadee did not vow would be done to him!—he must tell all.

He soon enlightened us: it was simply, that on the previous night, Datoo Mahomet Alee, finding all further resistance against the Siamese unavailing, had embarked in a long low canoe, pulling a number of paddles, and, accompanied by two prahus filled with women and armed men, to screen his movements,

had with the first ebb of the tide pushed down. My guns had been heard, and it was supposed we had captured the prahus; but all felt confident that the Datoo would escape from us, though he might be drowned, if the breeze freshened whilst he was crossing over to the Lancavas Islands, amongst which group a fleet of prahus was secreted.

My disappointment and chagrin were beyond the power of language to express. I had been fairly outwitted; my only consolation was in the fact that I was yet a novice in the art of war, and could not be expected to be a match for all the stratagems of so accomplished an adept as Mahomet Alee; and in the next place, I felt that in chasing the prahus instead of the sampan, I had done my duty, for they would naturally be the war-boats.

There was nothing for it now, but to go and tell my gallant captain. "Up anchor!" I said. "Jadee, I must go and tell the Rajah Laut, that 'Numero Tega' has had dirt thrown on her by Mahomet Alee."

Jadee had been in a perfect state of frenzy since the intelligence was verified by some other men in the boat: he stamped, he swore, called every Mahometan and pagan saint to witness, that such an act as the Datoo had committed was contrary to all ideas of Malay chivalry. He appealed to the crew, asked them,

in all their cruises—I ought perhaps to say villanies —had ever they heard of a Datoo who escaped a fight under the petticoats of a woman? If there was, Jadee with his creese was ready to send that man to Jehanum, or some other pleasant spot rejoicing in intense heat or cold; consequently, all swore they had never heard of such a thing.

However, when the poor fellow saw how cut up I was at my misfortune, he calmed down, and tried hard to afford consolation.

"Steer for the ship's usual position between Lancava and Parlis," I said. "Jadee, I am disgraced," and, youngster-like, I really felt as if I was; and a vision that it would be necessary for me to run away and join an opium clipper as soon as possible already haunted me.

"How could you be so ignorant of a Malay stratagem?" I said petulantly to Jadee.

His unaffected efforts to take all the blame on his own shoulders, and to cheer me, were quite delightful.

"Tell the Rajah Laut (Captain Warren) it was my fault, my officer!" said the honest fellow. "I ought to have guessed the manœuvre when the women screamed out; of a surety, they are the source of all mischief, and limbs of the evil one!" Then he proceeded to anathematise his bronze-cheeked countrywomen

in rather strong terms, but wound up with saying—what was true enough,—"The Rajah Laut will not be angry, Tuhan! He would have done the same, had he been there. Who would chase a canoe when a prahu—a capel praham*—was in sight?" "Give way! Numero Tegas" (No. 3.'s)—he shouted—"Mahomet Alee may be caught yet: he shall not escape us in a canoe next time!" "Hurrah!" shouted the poor fellows, and away flew the little "Number Three" under sails and sweeps towards the "Hyacinth;" and by the time we reached her, I had begun to fancy that the chances were yet in favour of catching not only Mahomet Alee, but his reported fleet likewise.

The ship soon hove in sight, and we altered course for her. Jadee seeing me somewhat consoled, edged to me, sat down at a respectful distance, and catching my eye, quietly remarked, "It was a pity we joked about the warning that bird gave us last night, Tuhan! Allah be praised, worse has not befallen us. One should never laugh at the warnings he sends by the mouths of unclean creatures;" here he expectorated, to purify himself. "I ought to have known

* "*Capel praham*" is a fighting prahu; they generally have a breast-work in the bows for the guns.

better," said he, with a self-upbraiding air: "after the number of times that accursed bird has warned me of evil, to think of my not heeding it!" He continued, "Allah be praised, it was no worse!" It was evident that I might have had a tale of unlimited length, had I sought it; but such was not then my humour, so I left Jadee to soliloquize away, until we anchored close to the "Hyacinth."

My worthy captain heard my tale, and then very kindly said that it was unfortunate, but could not be helped, and that the escape had been cleverly effected by a simple but well-laid manœuvre; it would be a wrinkle to me for the future; and I amused my dear friend the first lieutenant extremely, by vowing that in future, all the ladies in Quedah screaming should not stop my 18-pounder, if I had another chance at the rascally Datoo.

The description we gave of the canoe excited no small interest on board the "Hyacinth;" for it appeared that that same morning, directly it was daylight, the signal-man had descried from the masthead a boat paddling towards the Lancavas, answering exactly to the description of the one in which the pirate chieftain had escaped from the Pouchou. The captain's five-oared gig had been at once despatched in chase of her, in charge of Mr. Major,

the gunner, a very gallant and determined officer. The canoe and gig had both run out of sight, and there being no wind, the "Hyacinth" could not weigh to go in chase and support her gig, against which the canoe had long odds in her 20 men. Just at this juncture, the "Diana" steamer had arrived from Penang with despatches from Governor Bonham, and she was immediately sent after the gig; and we all now were most anxious to see the upshot of the chase.

Only one good had resulted from my pursuit and dispersion of the Datoo's attendant prahus on the previous night: it was that of compelling the canoe to make the traverse of the Strait so far to the southward as to bring her in sight of the "Hyacinth," which she otherwise would most decidedly not have done.

There was just light enough left to make the "general recall" for all the blockading force off Parlis. It was certain from the intelligence I brought, as well as from what had reached the captain from other quarters, that the chiefs had all escaped over to the Lancavas, and that a persistence in the blockade would do no earthly good, but might cause a host of unfortunates to fall into the hands of the Siamese, who were now completely masters of the province.

During the night the steamer "Diana" returned with the gig in tow. The gunner had had a severe chase, and at one time had considerably gained upon the canoe, her crew being apparently much exhausted. The intense heat and several hours' pulling had, however, distressed the gig's crew likewise: the canoe was not caught; and perhaps it was as well that the odds of a personal conflict of four to one had not to be risked, although the gallant gunner spoke of it as a fair fight, when Englishmen and black fellows were concerned.

Directly the canoe reached the wonderful labyrinth of islands of which the Lancavas and Laddas are composed, she was safe, for it would have been difficult there to have kept in sight of a friend even. At a sudden turn amongst the tortuous channels, through which the gig still dogged the heels of the canoe, the latter suddenly disappeared "like magic," to use the gunner's phrase, and neither she nor her crew could again be seen. She was doubtless whipped out of sight into the jungle, and the Malays hid her and themselves where all the eyes of an Argus would not have discovered them.

No one could help admiring the skill and pluck exhibited in this escape of the redoubted Datoo, and he had fully supported his high reputation in the

cleverness with which he and his pious *confrère* the Haggi Loūng had evaded us all. Of the Tonkoos we could learn nothing.

By dark the "Hyacinth" had all her Musquito squadron around her, three gun-boats and a pinnace and cutter. A rumour was afloat that Captain Warren had information of the position of the piratical nest on the Lancavas, and that the morrow would be a great day. All was curiosity and excitement, mixed with that pleasant dream-like feeling, that the coming day would bring something striking and novel; with the consciousness, come what might, that it would be acceptable, for one had health and strength to make it welcome and enjoy it — without one corroding thought, one anxiety to mar it.

I see it now, that calm and beautiful Malayan night, robed in silence and Godlike majesty — the vast heaven over-head, resplendent with glittering suns of other systems; that stream of glorious stars, the Milky Way, which renders the blue vault about it of so intense and immeasurably deep a hue — an eternity of blue; the young moon the while faintly sprinkling land and sea with a silvery light, tenfold more refreshing from the recollection of the past day of fervid, blazing sunlight; the calm unruffled ocean, like a highly polished blade, reflect-

ing stars and planets, ship and boats, in perfect but trembling outline—if touched by oar, or disturbed by the splash of fish feeding on the night-moths, it gleamed in many a whirl of lovely phosphorescent light, as if it were the surface of some huge crater of molten lava, iridescent where exposed to the air, but liquid fire beneath.

The low long hull of the rakish corvette; her lofty tapering spars; the apertures in her sides, through which glistened the reflected light from her polished guns, and the long pendant which quivered as the night air touched it,—told of my country's naval power; while around her lay, in the little gun-boats of the East India Company and their swarthy but loyal crews, evidences of that commercial greatness which had acquired for us the empire of the East, and made its many nations seek protection under the shadow of our old red ensigns. The Saxon cry of "All's well!" and the Malay sentry's "Jagga jagga!" struck strangely on the ear; and then all the crowd of hopes for the "great to-morrow" of sweet seventeen made the pulse throb wildly: you felt, indeed, it was a bright and glorious world we live in—a fig for those who say otherwise!

It was a scene well calculated to impress any one,—even a thoughtless young seaman could appreciate

all its poetry and loveliness; and it gratified all those strange longings for the wonderful which God implants, for His own good reasons, in the bosom of restless youth.

Amid such scenes the mind realises all those strange aspirations and mysterious cravings which perhaps in earlier years may have crowded into the mind when musing, as I am not ashamed to own I have done, over such lines as these: —

"There is a magnet-like attraction
That links the viewless with the visible,
And pictures things unseen. To realms beyond
Yon highway of the world my fancy flies.
When by her tall and triple masts we know
Some noble voyager that has to woo
The trade winds, and to stem th' ecliptic surge,
The coral groves, the shores of conch and pearl,
Where she will cast her anchor, and reflect
Her cabin-window lights on warmer waves;
The nights of palmy isles that she will see
Lit boundless by the fire-fly — all
The pomp of nature, and the inspiriting
Varieties of life she has to greet,
Come swarming o'er the meditative mind." *

* Campbell. "Lines from St. Leonard's."

Yet, O reader! by my beard I swear, that if thou hast not felt this, poetry and prose are alike lost upon thee; and all I can say is, Heaven help thee! Thou hadst need be sad if thou canst not quit this dull earth awhile and revel in the ideal, even as a light-hearted midshipman may.

How much longer I should have given way to this vein, deponent knoweth not; but, to my discomfiture —though possibly to the joy of those who may peruse these pages—the interpreter and Jadee interrupted me. They said I had given away all the rice and water, and that there was hardly enough left to give the people their breakfasts next morning. It was sad information to receive at such a juncture. I knew all the boats, as well as the ship, were at the end of their provisions and stores, consequently unable to replenish our wants; and that if I made any application upon that head, we should be assuredly sent down to Penang, and lose our share in the closing scenes.

I explained all this to Jadee: he fully entered into my feelings, begged me to say nothing about it; assured me, if I did not mind it, that a few days of nothing to eat and nothing to drink were of very common occurrence for himself and his countrymen; and that although it was his full intention to marry

a certain lovely "Tedia" on his arrival at Penang, and that she was impatient for his return, he could not think of doing so before the operations against Quedah were finally and perfectly finished; "and as," said Jadee, "we have some cocoa-nuts, and birds'-nests on board, we shall not, at any rate, starve, Tuhan."

Accordingly, it was decided that I should say nothing about the want of provisions, and that we were to trust in Providence for a wind-fall of rice and water, which, together with an occasional bite of salt fish, had long been mine as well as the crew's victualling.

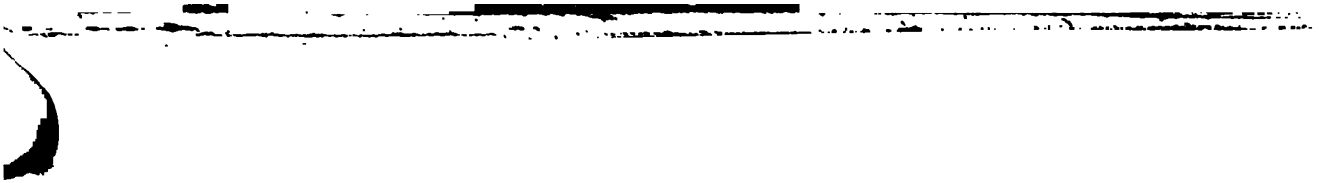
At cockcrow next morning—and in Malayia he must be a clever man who can escape the melody of chanticleer—the steamer "Diana" took all the gun-boats in tow, and we proceeded towards a small river called the Lungo, north of Setouè Bay. Casting off from her when she could not approach nearer from want of water, we pulled in for the place, expecting to find a squadron of seven war prahus: but here again the birds had flown; we only found the nests. The Lancavas were still reported to hide the prahus of Mahomet Alee, and the Siamese brig had been beaten off from a place called Malacca, on those islands. Towards Malacca, therefore—or rather for

the Lancavas Islands — we now rowed all that long scorching-hot afternoon, and anchored in the evening at 7 o'clock, after a heavy but unsuccessful day's search, our position then being on the eastern shores of the Lancavas Islands.

The steamer and "Hyacinth" parted company, going to the southward, and we were next day to proceed northward, examining alongshore for prahus, and to join the ship off the town of Malacca. We had only had this day one meal of rice, and a couple of drinks of water each man, on board the "Emerald;" fatigue, however, enabled us to sleep soundly until about one o'clock on the following morning, when I was ordered to weigh, in chase of a vessel that was seen to the southward. By daylight I had got sufficiently close to ascertain that it was No. 1. gun-boat, and then turned back, catching the Musquito squadron just as it had finished sweeping along the eastern shores of the Islands, and had made sail to a fine rattling sea-breeze which was rushing in between the Islands of Lancavas — or Langkawi, as the Malays called them — and Pulo Trotto.

With the tacks of our sails well down and sheets flat aft, we slashed our boats up against the fiery breeze (fiery only in the sailor's acceptation of that term), hatches on, and green seas flying four reefs

SCRIPTURE OF THE CANAANITE WOMAN.



high! it was glorious excitement to feel every plank quivering with the momentum given by the sails. "One reef, and no more, Jadee, as you love me! There's Halkett in the 'Ruby' carrying canvass as if he had 'the little cherub' stowed away in his fore-peak, and knew no harm could come to masts or hull. Barclay in the cutter and Drake in the pinnace are just as bad as we, boys! they are fairly smothering themselves in spray.

"Whew! The gusts freshen, let fly the sheets for a minute, and then haul aft again. Talk of the excitement of Newmarket! it's nothing to a chase to windward when the breeze is fresh and the sails are large!"

As my little craft passed the pinnace, Mr. Drake hailed, and desired me to proceed, make the best of my way to Malacca, prevent all egress until his arrival, and to look out for his signals during the night. We weathered the Islands in the afternoon, and then proceeded to see what could be scraped together in the shape of food. Not a drop of water or grain of rice was left, and first the night chase and then the breeze had prevented us procuring any from the other gun-boats. It was now that I saw the edible birds'-nests first eaten,—Jadee had got a bag of them out of some prahu; and there

were, moreover, some green cocoa-nuts: each man was given one of the latter, and any that liked might help themselves to the nests!

I partook of both, the nests tasting very like isinglass, but serving to stay the cravings of a very keen appetite. The wind now fell, which distressed me much, for my men, though not complaining, were very exhausted: however, lest we should be thrown upon an iron-bound coast, the oars had again to be manned, and with difficulty we made our way along, for the sea on the beam caused the vessel to roll so much that the men could hardly keep their seats.

Night came on, and the coast was still a sheer cliff: however, my Malays behaved admirably, and pulled cheerily, encouraging one another with the prospect of plenty of rice and fish on the morrow. At last, after three long and anxious hours, a bay showed itself on our left hand: fancying it was that in which the hostile prahus and battery were situated, we loaded the guns afresh, and pulled carefully in, but made the circuit of it without finding anything. I almost had decided on awaiting daylight, when a dip in the land gave promise of another bay, and as we swept round a rocky point, numerous lights afloat and on shore showed we had reached our destination. The oars were now rapidly muffled,

my crew zealously wrapping part of their wearing apparel round the looms of their oars; and thus we swept in, pulling a quiet minute-stroke.

Directly we could distinctly make out the hulls of the prahus, the oars were laid in, and when the gun-boat had lost her way through the water, an anchor was bent to a hawser, and lowered cleverly down to the bottom, so as to make no noise in anchoring; all lights were carefully hidden, the decks cleared for action, and thus we lay, watching the enemy's two outer vessels, a large schooner and a prahu, without their being aware of our presence in the bay, a light mist serving still further to conceal us.

I have been thus minute in the last two days' operations, to show the reader how zealous, docile, and cheerful the Malays could be when the occasion required it. They had had no rations since the previous day at about 8 A.M, and no water since the previous night; they had been twenty-four hours upon their oars during the last forty hours, yet not a murmur escaped them; and I would defy seamen of any nation to have excelled them in any quality which renders a sailor valuable. I cannot but feel that, in a nation like ours, possessing a vast colonial empire, which, in the event of a war, either for our commercial supremacy with America, or for our civil

and religious liberties with despotic Europe, we might be sorely pressed to defend, it behoves every loyal man to cherish and uphold a race of sailors who combine, with all their faults and all their vices, many of the finest attributes of a seafaring people.

They may be pirates; they may be buccaneers: so were we; and we still pride ourselves upon the naval glories of men who founded our reputation as a naval nation upon what was nothing less than robbery upon the high seas. Restrain, and bring the Malays under our rule gently, and they will serve us heartily and zealously in the hour of England's need; they are the best race of colonial sailors we possess: grind them down, shoot them down, paddle over them, and they will join the first enemy, and be their own avengers.

CHAP. XXIV.

A tropical Shower. — Early Breakfast. — The Malay piratical Soirée. — Jadee upbraids them for being surprised. — Preparing for Action. — Demeanour of English and Malay Seamen.—Malay Charm for shooting straight. — My Coxswain; his Piety. — Burning, sinking, and destroying. — The Renegade turns Traitor. — The large Reptiles of Langkawi.—The Tale of the Oular-besar, or Great Snake.—The Snake choked by a holy Man. — A remarkable Fossil. — A Pirate's Hiding-place. — Lovely Scenery.—The Anger of the Skies.—Struck by Lightning.—Close of Operations against Quedah.—Conclusion.

ABOUT midnight, down came the rain—vertically, mercilessly, as it only can and does in the tropics. We got up, for sleep was impossible, and drank and washed, washed and drank, of the water like veritable ducks. Flashes of vivid lightning lighted up the bay occasionally, and showed us, not only that a considerable force of Malay vessels had at last been caught, but that our own flotilla was pulling in from to seaward.

That they too saw us was very evident from the occasional noise which was heard, and the number of lights dancing about on shore. At about three o'clock in the morning, we sent away to the "Diamond" gunboat, and got a bag of rice and some fish, as well as a cask of water: the fire was lighted at once, and I gave an order for "carte-blanche" in the gastronomic way. It was indeed a delightful breakfast, though an early one, for the dawn was only just breaking. Let any one fast eight-and-forty hours, and he will think the same, even supposing that he should have had, like ourselves, one green cocoa-nut, and an unlimited quantity of birds'-nests to refresh himself with meanwhile.

When the sun rose, and the night-mists rolled back from the lands around us, our little flotilla lay at anchor in the northern part of a beautiful bay, which revelled in all the loveliness of Malayan scenery. The "Hyacinth" was just appearing at the opposite extreme of the bay, having passed round the south end of the Lancavas as we had done by the north.

The pirates were fairly caught. Their vessels consisted of two queer-looking schooners, mounting ten small guns each; one of them had 12-pounder carronades, the other, 3-pounder and 6-pounder

guns. Three large and handsome prahus and a tope constituted the rest of their force, the prahus showing three or four guns, and the tope a 32-pounder carronade. These vessels were all covered by an eight-gun battery, situated on a small conical hill in the elbow of the bay; this battery it was that had so roughly handled the "Teda Bagoose," or "Good-for-Nothing," the slashing brig of our imperial allies. There was much excitement on shore; armed men were passing and repassing rapidly amongst the cocoa-nut trees that lined the beach, boats were paddling to and fro, but there was no village to be seen. The pirates were evidently surprised. They had doubtless counted upon the grace of another day or two, when this rear-guard would have escaped, as most of the forty prahus did that we had seen at Trang in the previous year.

It was necessary to await Captain Warren's arrival in the gig of the "Hyacinth," before we could do anything against the enemy; and I had plenty of time to hear Jadee descant in flowery terms upon the beauty and advantages of the Lancavas Islands over Quedah proper, of which, however, in the good old days, it formed a part. One of its chief merits in my sea-king of a coxswain's eyes, was the wonderful

facilities its labyrinth of islands and channels offered for the safe hiding of a fleet of a thousand prahus.

"D— pouls!" said Jadee, anglicising his opinion of the enemy's prahus now cut off. "Ah! you d— pouls! Had I been their captain, Tuhan, do you think I would have anchored in such a place as this, whilst *Orang-putihs* were cruising about? Ah! you d— pouls! The Datoo cannot be here," added Jadee — for my coxswain did him the justice to believe that so experienced a tactician would not be caught in an open bay. Then my worthy Jadee proceeded to point out some localities famous in his recollection for Love and War, the only two deities he believed in, and of sundry foiled chases he had had of prahus in and amongst these Lancavas since he took Company's pay.

Captain Warren was seen to be approaching, and the word was now passed to clear for action! Jadee and his crew did so with extreme alacrity. He adorned himself according to the most approved rules of Malay military etiquette. His sarong was wrapped tighter round the waist, and brought round the thighs, so as to leave his nervous little legs more than usually free; a red sleeveless waistcoat, quilted so as to resist a knife-cut, hung slack round his person, leaving his muscular chest and

arms ready for any exertion; whilst a stiff and cocksy-looking handkerchief fluttered around his glossy and erect hair, and in combination with his square chin, high cheek-bones, and an enormous quid of tobacco stuck under his upper lip, made him look as ferocious an individual as ever figured in the character of a bloodthirsty Malay in a three-volume romance, even supposing that he had not bristled, as he did, with no less than three creeses. He had, first, his badi, or small knife, answering to the Highland skene-dhu, then the regular waving bladed creese of about a foot or fourteen inches long, and, lastly, a heavy straight double-edged Illanoon creese, resembling somewhat an old Roman sword.

The rest of the crew were got up in a very similar manner, and strutted about with a martial ardour quite comical, in so far as it was a demonstrative mode of exhibiting the same feelings which fluttered in the breasts of our more stoical English seamen and marines. These were quietly examining percussion caps, or seeing the nipples of their muskets all clear, and indulging in some rough jest; such as that of Joe Hutchinson, the marine, who, taking an imaginary aim at some object on shore, apostrophises his musket thus:—"Well, this old gal (his musket) never misses fire at practice; and

if she only shoots straight to-day, and pitches my sixty rounds into them precious Malays, I'll cut a notch in the stock, and give her my grog, if she likes;" or the light-hearted foretop-men, or skylarking flaxen-headed Lambies*, who, polishing their cutlasses, wonder if they will be able to play the fifth-stick practice on the head of some unfortunate pirate with "this here cutlash," or suggest innocently to some old petty-officer, that they felt jolly well sure there were both grog-shops and women ashore, and hanged, if they had a chance, if they wouldn't look for them!

A playful tendency, or moral weakness, which of course the petty-officer mentally resolves they shall not indulge in, if a sharp pair of eyes can prevent these frolicsome individuals carrying out their intions.

"Tuhan!" said Jadee, looking the picture of mystery, "have you got a piece of pork that you could spare?"

"No; but I can get a bit in a minute," I replied. "What are you going to do with the unclean animal?"

"It's a great charm," said Jadee. "I forgot it

* Lambies, or lambs, a nickname for the youngest seamen in a man-of-war, generally the mizentop-men.

until the captain of the bow-gun reminded me; but it's invaluable against an enemy."

"What? How? In what way, oh Jadee?"

"Simply by cutting it up into small pieces, and putting it into a gun upon the first round it fires."

"Botheration!" I said, "why, you are like an old Malay lady, Jadee! firing fids of pork at a man won't hurt him."

He coloured up, and walked away; but Jamboo came and said, "Do get a bit of pork, sir; these Malay men think it a charm to make a gun shoot straight; they have some tradition about it, and it will not do any harm, at any rate." Accordingly, I got them a bit of pork, and Jamboo cut it up, and Jadee loaded the bow-gun with grape, canister, and chopped pork,—a villanous compound to say the least about it,—and then resumed his station, perfectly ready for what Allah might in his wisdom send him.

Captain Warren now joined us, inspected the boats to see that all were ready, of which he would have entertained no doubt, could he have only known the charge in my 18-pounder,—and then a message was sent in to the pirates, giving them five minutes for an unconditional surrender of their vessels.

It is a great fiye minutes in a man's lifetime, that

five minutes before an action is commenced; especially when, as was the case with us, there happens to be a disparity of forces on his side.

"Jadee," I said, "Datoo Mahomet Alee will send you to join the houris to-night."

He was not in a jocular mood: he drew his hand across his throat, and pointed his fingers upward, as if he felt perfectly certain his virtues would lead him that way, and said "his life was in the hand of Allah," adding that beautiful verse from the Koran, which is so often used as the war-chaunt of the true believer: "Exult not, and despond not, so shall ye prevail." *

Jadee's chances of a heavenward flight were, however, dashed to the ground, for the Malays showed evident intentions of surrendering their vessels; indeed, they decamped as fast as possible from them and the battery, before the expiration of the five minutes. The nicodar of one of the vessels, a tope, came to Captain Warren, and prayed for mercy, with the excuse that he was only an armed trader; and rather than be unjust, the very doubtful proof of his assertions were allowed to have weight, and he was ordered to be off as fast as the wind would let him. This hero was the renegade son of

* The Koran, 3rd chapter.

an old English soldier, who lived at Penang; he had adopted Mahometanism as his creed, and could not have been distinguished from a Malay in any respect.

Orders were now given to pull in, and burn, sink, and destroy: this was done with no small good-will. The prahus and schooners were soon wrapt in flames, their guns being first thrown overboard, then the battery was dismantled, and the guns disabled most effectually. In a small creek we discovered two more very handsome prahus, just off the stocks, and a couple of long brass 9-pounders; furthermore, we found abundant proofs that the Malay chieftains had been winding up their affairs, and that, had we been a few days later, they would have flitted back to their native haunts in Sumatra.

As it was, there was still a possibility that their escape from the island would be now prevented, and that they might eventually fall into Siamese hands.

As every fresh explosion took place, or a fresh outbreak of fire and smoke betokened the success of our work of destruction, loud cheers and shouts rose from the English and Malay seamen, and one could hardly recognise, in the excited actors of this scene, the men who a short week previously had been ministering to the wants of the fugitive pirates of Quedah fort and Parlis town, or dry-nursing their

infants. Funny fellows are sailors, whether English or Malay—a strange mixture of the tiger and the lamb.

When everything was wrapt in flames beyond all possibility of the conflagration being quenched, we had a hasty noonday meal, and were then ordered to "make sail and man the oars," the renegade having offered to conduct us to a spot where he said there were fifteen prahus concealed.

Yah! Yah! Yah! responded the gun-boat's crew, to the Englishmen's hurrah at the joyful news; and away we dashed for a place amongst the Laddas, called Bass Harbour, and, turning into lovely and tortuous channels, rushed on like bloodhounds after our prey. "Now," said my coxswain, "you will see Malay scenery and Malay men's haunts!"

The island of Lancavas—or islands, for there may be more than one—is surrounded by a host of islets, called the Grains of Pepper (from their number), like an emerald set in seed pearls. Lancavas island is mountainous, but has broad valleys in its interior, and a considerable quantity of flat land bordering the eastern and southern shores. While the plains and rice-fields of Quedah are parched by a drought of many months' duration, the hills of Lancavi collect around their summits the vapours

of the sea, which, as they condense, fall in refreshing showers upon the thirsty vegetation at the base.

It is not therefore to be wondered at that, even amongst the naturally dense jungles of Malayia, those of the valleys of the Lancavas are pre-eminent, and that in those dank and hot forests reptiles abound of enormous size. The great boa-constrictor here grows to a size which it will not do to talk of without being able to produce the original, though I am morally convinced that the skin of one which I saw, without its head, must have been from 25 to 30 feet long, when complete. However, if I wanted to get a true and faithful account of a very father of snakes, I had only to refer to Jadee: he had a stock on hand which would have satisfied the most credulous glutton.

Whilst crossing Malacca Bay, I suggested that he had spoken of a famous snake, which was only got rid of by a very devout Haggi,—perhaps Jadee would favour me with the history? but mind, I wanted it unadorned—a really faithful tale which I could swear to.

Jadee looked serious, put his hand upon his breast, and trusted his veracity was beyond all suspicion, and that, at any rate, I might swear to receiving all information just as unadulterated as it came to him: what more could I expect?

Crossing his legs, renewing his quid, and shouting to his men to "give way!" and beat Number Two gun-boat, he then proceeded to relate how, in former days, the Rajahs of Quedah were bound by a law, whenever a new king ascended the throne, or when war was declared with another state, to sacrifice a virgin daughter of the Royal family to an enormous boa-constrictor, or Oular-besar, that dwelt on the Lancavas, though it would occasionally visit the Malay continent. In return for this delicate tribute, the Oular-besar abstained from feeding largely on the Quedah folk, confining its attention to Siamese, or people of Mergui, and suchlike *canaille;* and it even extended its good offices to watching over the homes and wives of its Malay friends, who were absent upon little innocent cruises at sea. Indeed, so far had they succeeded in propitiating its good-will, that on a hostile fleet of prahus appearing suddenly off this very bay, the generous boa-constrictor stretched itself across from one point of it to the other as a boom, and defied all the efforts of the enemy to enter. Jadee pointed first to one horn of Malacca Bay and then the other, and though they were a couple of miles apart, I'm bound to say Jadee did *not* blush, as he added, "and that will give you, oh! my officer, some idea of its length!"

I coughed, and said I should like to have seen that

snake's mother! My coxswain's feelings were hurt, he was silent, until I gently smoothed down his feathers by asking what might have been the end of this very amiable monster. He continued, "When Mahomet,—may his tomb exhale unceasingly the odour of holiness!—sent holy men to show the poor Malays the road to Paradise, the Haggis said it was wrong to sacrifice, even to such a big snake, and the Kings' daughters were not sent to feed the Oular-besar.

"The creature became very annoyed, and the consequence was, he almost cleared the Island of Lancavas of its population and cattle. All schemes failed to check its wrath, prayers were offered up in all the mosques, but for our previous sins the Oular-besar still lived, and still kept swallowing up Malays, until the fields were left untilled, and the country was fast becoming one great forest. At last Allah sent relief, as he always does to the faithful.

"One day, a most holy man, an Arab Sheik, famous for his piety and knowledge of the word of God, arrived at Quedah; he exhorted all the people to remain firm in their new faith, for some of them were backsliders, and thought of the good old times. He pointed out to them, that the wrath of the Oular-besar was only a means to test their faith; but that

now Allah was satisfied, and had sent him to put a stop to their sorrows. The holy man now prayed, and all the people with him, and then he took ship, and proceeded to the Lancavas,—anchoring near the place where we destroyed the prahus. The holy man performed his ablutions, said his prayers, put on his green turban, and balancing the Koran on his head, landed at once either to drive the Oular-besar away or to die.

"Down came the snake from those distant valleys, and looked wistfully at the high-dried, tough old Arab; and the poor boa-constrictor no doubt sighed at the remembrance of bygone tit-bits. The holy man spread his carpet, and began to pray; the Oular-besar wrapt him in one fold of its deadly grasp, and a shriek of 'God is great!' rang in the ears of his shipmates, as he disappeared down the throat of the monster—turban, Koran, and all!

"Instead of the Oular-besar reposing, as was to be expected, while it digested the venerable Haggi, a violent fury seemed to seize it; its whole body writhed in a perfect frenzy, it raised its head high above the loftiest trees, its eyes flashed lightning, and for a few minutes the creature seemed upon the point of dashing into the sea; then, with a hiss that made the beholders' blood curdle in their veins, it shot swiftly away in the direction of the mountains,

and since that day the Oular-besar has never been seen, and its brethren generally prefer pigs, poultry, and game to true believers!"

"Wonderful!" I exclaimed; "and so no one has ever seen the big snake since?"

"No one, Tuhan! The words of the holy man came true; for when did a Haggi tell a lie?—but some of the gold-seekers who scale those mountains you see in the direction of Patani, report that in a deep and narrow valley, there is to be seen the vast bones of a big snake around a long green stone, which doubtless, as Allah is great, are the remains of the Oular-besar and that most virtuous priest."

"Ah! I see, Jadee," added I, "the priest, in English sailors' phrase, 'choked the luff'* of that snake."

"Very probably," said Jadee, to whom I had not interpreted the expression. "Very probably, Tuhan; but it was a happy day for Quedah when that holy man came to it."

Meantime the boats had entered a wonderful labyrinth of islands and deep water-channels: not only, as Jadee had said, might a thousand prahus have

* "Choking the luff" is done by placing a piece of wood or rope in a block or pulley, in such a way, that the rope which is rove through the block will not run. The term is often applied to a tough story not easily swallowed.

been hidden away, but a fleet of line-of-battle ships might as easily have been secreted in the tortuous channels and hundred creeks around us. It was a sight to make the heart leap, and the blood to flow fast, to be thus surrounded by such gorgeous Eastern scenery; it was exactly the haunt one had imagined ought to exist for dashing pirates and fleet-footed prahus.

Now we are passing through that heavenly blue water,—bright and clear as woman's eye,—which shows, over a coral bed, a diminutive and wonderful submarine forest of every fantastic form and colour, over which we are swiftly passing. On the one hand lies a long and picturesque mountain, clothed with luxuriant vegetation, aslant which the Western sun is casting a million tints of warm and luscious colouring; on the other, some fantastic islet throws its sharp outline up against the sky, whilst the graceful palm, the plantain, and pandanus, hang round it, here clinging to some grey rock, like old age in the arms of beauty, or feathering over the edge of a beetling cliff, as if they were ostrich-plumes round some grim warrior's head.

A little farther, the trail winds through a maze of islets, and "lustrous woodlands" each unlike its neighbour, and strangely beautiful, and just when all farther progress seems hopeless in such a tangled

web, there bursts upon us a broad expanse of water, laughing in sunlight and breeze. It might be a lake, except that between the islets on the seaward side, the light of a declining sun streams in, in a flood of gold which contrasts richly with the deep purple of their shaded sides.

On, on we went, now sailing, now rowing,—narrow channels, over which the trees appeared to arch, led away as if to the base of the tall peaks of the interior, around whose crests were fast mustering heavy clouds, which portended one of those fierce squalls for which the Straits of Malacca are famous, and generally known under the name of Sumatrans; and then we swept along a beach so white, so glittering,—flowers and coral, vegetation and sea,—it seemed as if Neptune and Flora were striving for mastery.

At 9 o'clock that evening, the squall which threatened at sunset swept over the beautiful scene I have made a feeble effort to pourtray. As the thunder pealed over our heads, and the forked lightning crackled through the refreshing gale, we came to anchor, and rested after another long day's labour. I was surprised to observe the superstitious horror betrayed by my crew at the thunder and lightning; for I thought these would have been to them very ordinary phenomena.

During the storm, some portion of the electric fluid, on its passage to the water, took a fancy to make a conductor of a chain-cable and an anchor that were hanging to the bows; there was immediately a general appeal to Mahomet and the Koran; and one man, more devout or more wealthy than the rest, made a vow to sacrifice sundry game-cocks and certain rice: be it said to the Malay's honour, that a few days after, when, as he believed, his prayers had been granted, and all danger over, his promise was faithfully performed.

Jadee remarked, in a serious tone, to me during the squall, and referring to the thunder, "that the skies were angry." I ventured jestingly to reply, that perhaps it was the Oular-besar suffering from indigestion, brought on by the Haggi! Jadee was horrified, and said that Malay men knew too well what thunder and lightning were, to joke of them. I believe he began now to think me a scoffer — for, like all Malays, he held local legends and superstitions in equal reverence with Mahomet's doctrines. Perhaps, too, it occurred to him that though he was no Haggi, yet his chances of entertainment amongst the houris would be smaller still if he was not more guarded in communications upon religious subjects with an Infidel like myself.

The next morning, at early break of day, we were

again pulling and sailing under the guidance of our renegade guide; but after searching every spot he suggested, and chasing sundry imaginary prahus which, on close approach, resolved themselves into the stems of old trees, or rocks, it became certain that the birds, if there ever had been any, had flown, and our captain decided on returning to the ship.

In obedience to our orders, and with a fair wind, we commenced to thread our way back again through the Laddas, reaching the "Hyacinth" late the same afternoon.

The next day saw the close of our operations against the Malays of Quedah; it was very evident that all those that could fly had done so; those who remained, had no resource but to give their allegiance to the Siamese Government or stand the consequences. Numero Tega and the other gun-boats were ordered to proceed to Penang, whilst their quondam commanders returned to the "Hyacinth," after an absence of one hundred and fourteen days.

It was not without regret I bid my crew good-bye; for my first essay as a captain had been a very very happy one; and if ever a set of poor fellows tried to show that the feeling was mutual, it was exhibited in the warm good-bye of Jadee and his swarthy crew.

My tale is told; the "Hyacinth" remained on the coast only a few days longer, and Captain Warren

communicated with the new Siamese authorities of Parlis and Quedah. He damped their military ardour at Quedah fort, by obliging them to liberate very expeditiously a British subject whom they had captured, and upon whom they were about to practise some original cruelties. The Rajah of Ligor, Commander-in-chief of the Siamese forces, sent to express his gratitude for all the able assistance that had been received from us, accompanying it by a token of his Imperial master's favour in the shape of a valuable gold tea-pot for our gallant Captain, which he received official permission to retain, together with a most cordial letter of thanks for his able services from the Governor General of British India, the Earl of Auckland.

Dear reader, farewell! If, in my attempt to give you a fair impression of the much-abused Malay, I have succeeded in removing from your mind one prejudice against that people, I shall not have written in vain, and I shall have done my part towards making you think, as I would fain do, that

> "God framed mankind to be one mighty family,
> Himself our Father, and the world our home."

THE END.

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